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Friday Review

Analysis, page 14

## One worm plus £30m equals a DNA triumph



Nematode: tiny worm with 97 million letter code

**Tim Radford**  
**Science Editor**

**S**CIENTISTS who took an almost invisible worm to pieces to unravel its DNA have finally completed the first genetic blueprint for a whole, multi-celled animal.

The effort took 15 years and cost £30 million and, ironically, the creature's genetic code will never be printed. The worm may be tiny, but the code is 97 million letters long, which if printed on pages would be 25 times thicker than Tolstoy's War and Peace. It can be published

only on the Internet.

The animal is a millimetre-sized nematode worm called *Caenorhabditis elegans*. It exists almost everywhere in the temperate world, flourishing in compost.

The particular worms chosen to provide the first complete DNA sequence of a whole animal are descended from a small family collected from rotting mushrooms in Bristol in 1955. They are now being tested in champagne in 250 laboratories around the world.

*C. elegans* contains, according to the journal Science today, at least 19,099 genes, "written" in an alphabet composed of four DNA acids.

Humans are composed of trillions of cells. The nematode has only 950. The human brain is so complex that some researchers argue that it will never be understood. But *C. elegans* has a nervous system of only 300 cells, and researchers can watch every one of those "brain" cells at work as it squirms around in its tiny world.

The nematode's sex life is exquisitely simple: the *elegans* species is either male or self-fertilising hermaphrodite. The hermaphrodites mate with themselves unless a male turns up.

Scientists chose the worm because it is simple, transparent and — hugely important

— outnumbers all other complex creatures on the planet. The worms infect a billion humans, spread diseases including river blindness and elephantiasis, devour crops and scavenge in their millions in every square yard of soil, river mud and ocean sediment. The blueprint will answer questions about evolutionary history and biodiversity — there could be a million species of nematode.

Above all, the little creature offers a simple laboratory tool kit for thinking about human genes. The proteins that make a worm also make a human. The complicated machinery of love, hunger and fear that exists in humans also exists

much more simply in the worm. The precise "controls" that govern cancer and old age are easier to spot in a worm than in a human.

And the 97 million-letter script for a worm is a preparation for the effort to "read" the 3 billion-letter recipe for humankind, which should be completed in about five years.

The worm study began in piecemeal fashion 15 years ago: Cambridge scientists, some of them funded by the Medical Research Council, began copying pieces of the worm's chromosomes and despatching them to scientists around the globe who were looking for specific genes. It turned into a system-

atic effort to assemble the entire DNA sequence.

"The worm really is an animal. It has got bits and pieces inside like a nervous system, little muscles and so forth, just like us," said Dr John Sulston, director of the Sanger Centre in Cambridge which spearheaded the British effort to bring the worm to book.

"The more we go on, the more we realise it is really a microcosm of humanity. This is why it is so valuable, and why it is worthwhile working on it: we are learning about all animals, indeed about all of life as we go forward."

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Northern Ireland's Nobel Peace Prize laureates, David Trimble and John Hume, light a beacon yesterday outside Oslo's city hall. PHOTOGRAPH: KNUIT FIELDSTAD

## Trimble, Hume receive Nobels

**John Mulvan**  
**Oslo**

**N**ETHER Nobel Peace Prize winner knew what was coming. Throughout scores of television interviews they had showed no signs of getting close. There were no handshakes at the presentation ceremony at the city hall. There was no small talk.

So when they jointly grasped a beacon of peace in the frozen city of Oslo, it was gingerly at first. The last time they were side by side on a stage was at a concert just three days before the May referendum.

Then it helped seal the overwhelming Yes vote for the Good Friday Agreement, and yesterday's event may yet breathe new life into it.

Mr Hume, aged 61, was first to speak. He told the audience of 1,000 guests: "Two major political traditions share the island of Ireland. We are destined by history to live side by side. Two representatives of these political traditions stand here today. We do so in shared fellowship and a shared determination to make Ireland, after the hardship and pain of many years,

a true and enduring symbol of peace."

He managed a barb at his fellow laureate over the failure to set up the proposed power-sharing executive and cross-border bodies. It was, he said, time for all political leaders to fulfil the referendum mandate and set up the institutions that would remove violence and division in Ireland.

Mr Trimble's jibes were marked. Moments after Mr Hume's visionary speech, he launched into an attack on speeches "full of sound and fury, idealistic in intention, but impossible of implementation".

He suggested politicians talking of vision should see

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## ... but it could have been Boris's big moment

**Martin Kettle**

**Y**ESTERDAY was John Hume's and David Trimble's day. But if history had turned out just a little differently, the Nobel prize audience in Oslo might have been honouring a very different Northern Ireland peace-maker: Boris Yeltsin.

Until now, the Russian president's involvement in the Irish question has been confined to a memorable failure to leave his aircraft at Shannon Airport to meet assembled dignitaries.

Mr Yeltsin's personal bid to solve the conflict has been a closely guarded secret, not least from the people of Northern Ireland. But this is how the Yeltsin peace mission nearly happened:

In May last year, Nato

member state leaders and Mr Yeltsin met in Paris to sign a post-cold war friendship treaty. It was the debut on the world stage for Tony Blair, as well as an opportunity for Bill Clinton to hold talks with the ailing Russian leader.

Mr Clinton and Mr Blair were having a private talk about Northern Ireland in a room in the Elysée Palace before the signing ceremony when the door opened and Mr Yeltsin entered with his interpreter. Mr Clinton introduced him to Mr Blair.

We're talking about the problems in Northern Ireland, Mr Clinton explained. Tony's trying to get the peace process moving again over there, and we need an internationally respected figure to chair the talks. We were wondering about



President Yeltsin: made himself available

getting Senator George Mitchell back, but he's playing hard to get, Mr Blair explained. "Wait a moment," suggested a jovial Mr Clinton, trying to bring the Russian

leader into the conversation. "Maybe Boris would like to do the job."

The three leaders laughed and slapped one another on the back. Then they started discussing other items on their agenda. Nuclear weapons. International debt. The Middle East. As ever, Mr Clinton did most of the talking.

After a few minutes, Mr Yeltsin leaned over and whispered to his interpreter. Very politely, the Russian interpreter interrupted Mr Clinton in mid-flow. "The president says that he has accepted your offer to chair the peace talks in Northern Ireland," he announced.

Mr Clinton and Mr Blair made brief, panicked eye-contact. Trying not to sound rude, Mr Blair stammered something about the

exceptional time demands of the job. Mr Clinton backed him up as diplomatically as he knew how, taking care to thank the Russian leader.

As Mr Clinton moved on to another matter, Mr Yeltsin again leaned over to his interpreter. The interpreter gave a slight cough, and intervened again. "The president says he will begin his Northern Ireland peace mission next Monday. He has a free week next week, and proposes to fly to Belfast to begin work."

Mr Blair and Mr Clinton exchanged alarmed glances. This time the Prime Minister swallowed hard and took it upon himself to address the Russian president. There had been, Mr Blair explained, a most unfortunate and regrettable misunderstanding...

**Mark Atkinson**  
**Economics Correspondent**

**T**HE Bank of England stepped up efforts to steer the economy off the rails of recession yesterday by cutting interest rates for the third month in a row, in a move which woo widespread acclaim in industry, the City and government.

In an aggressive response to the worsening state of the global and domestic economy, the Bank's nine-member monetary policy committee took the City by surprise by matching November's half point reduction.

Most analysts had expected a quarter point cut following the committee's recent forecast that inflation was on course to hit the Government's 2.5 per cent target.

The interest rate cut to 6.25 per cent, which cancels out all but one of the six quarter point increases in the cost of borrowing since the general election, triggered an immediate round of mortgage rate reductions which will shave £24 off the average £60,000 home loan.

Standing in for the Chancellor, who was attending his father's funeral, Stephen Byers, Chief Secretary to the Treasury, told the Commons: "The Government welcomes today's decision by the Bank. It will be good news for businesses, for consumers and for homeowners."

City analysts said a half point cut was the right response to the deteriorating economic outlook, highlighted yesterday by the announcement of 1,000 job losses at the china maker, Royal Doulton.

But they added that the momentum behind the economic slowdown meant that Britain was unlikely this winter to avoid at best a technical recession, defined as two successive three-month periods of declining output.

"Further rate cuts are inevitable," said economist Nick Stamatovic of Bank Austria. "They should be down to 5 per cent by next summer."

John Monks, TUC general secretary, said: "This is good news for jobs. But UK interest rates are still higher than across the euro zone. The Bank now needs to make a New Year's resolution to keep on cutting."

The Confederation of British Industry's chief economist, Kate Barker, said: "This second half point cut is welcome. It proves the MPC is



prepared to set against the dangers of deflation."

While also endorsing the move, the Tories said it showed the Bank did not believe the Chancellor's "fantasy forecasts" for growth, which envisage only a modest slowdown next year followed by a rapid recovery the

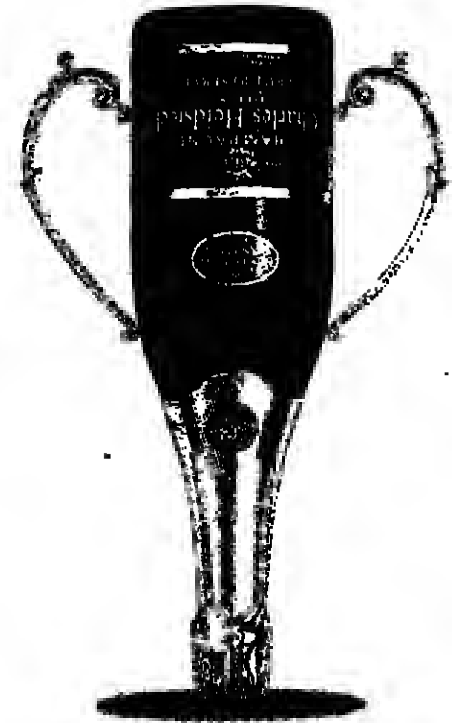
following year. The shadow chancellor, Francis Maude, said: "The Bank has had to take drastic action because they realise that because of Labour's policies, Britain is facing a downturn."

In a statement, the Bank said the prospect for global activity appeared to have weakened since its November inflation report.

Despite adding the caveat that the labour market remain tight and share prices high, the Bank said it thought a further reduction in the cost of borrowing was needed to avoid undershooting the Government's inflation target, which requires the MPC to deliver an underlying rate of 2.5 per cent.

Sterling rose slightly after the rate reduction but closed virtually unchanged. Shares closed down 8.8 at 5660.3.

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Home loan rates tumble, page 15



CHARLES HEIDSIECK 'MIS EN CAVE EN 1993'  
VOTED BEST CHAMPAGNE IN THE WORLD

Alfa Romeo D 8.50	Agave E 8.50	Kawasaki RD 0.50	Qatar CR 8.50
Alfa Romeo US 2	Agave K 30	Lebanon US 2	Qatar US 2
Alfa Romeo FF 10	Alfa Romeo FF 15	Lebanon US 2.75	Qatar US 2.75
Alfa Romeo FF 20	Alfa Romeo FF 25	Lebanon US 3.25	Qatar US 3.25
Alfa Romeo FF 25	Alfa Romeo FF 30	Lebanon US 3.75	Qatar US 3.75
Alfa Romeo FF 30	Alfa Romeo FF 35	Lebanon US 4.25	Qatar US 4.25
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Alfa Romeo FF 40	Alfa Romeo FF 45	Lebanon US 5.25	Qatar US 5.25
Alfa Romeo FF 45	Alfa Romeo FF 50	Lebanon US 5.75	Qatar US 5.75
Alfa Romeo FF 50	Alfa Romeo FF 55	Lebanon US 6.25	Qatar US 6.25
Alfa Romeo FF 55	Alfa Romeo FF 60	Lebanon US 6.75	Qatar US 6.75
Alfa Romeo FF 60	Alfa Romeo FF 65	Lebanon US 7.25	Qatar US 7.25
Alfa Romeo FF 65	Alfa Romeo FF 70	Lebanon US 7.75	Qatar US 7.75
Alfa Romeo FF 70	Alfa Romeo FF 75	Lebanon US 8.25	Qatar US 8.25
Alfa Romeo FF 75	Alfa Romeo FF 80	Lebanon US 8.75	Qatar US 8.75
Alfa Romeo FF 80	Alfa Romeo FF 85	Lebanon US 9.25	Qatar US 9.25
Alfa Romeo FF 85	Alfa Romeo FF 90	Lebanon US 9.75	Qatar US 9.75
Alfa Romeo FF 90	Alfa Romeo FF 95	Lebanon US 10.25	Qatar US 10.25
Alfa Romeo FF 95	Alfa Romeo FF 100	Lebanon US 10.75	Qatar US 10.75
Alfa Romeo FF 100	Alfa Romeo FF 105	Lebanon US 11.25	Qatar US 11.25
Alfa Romeo FF 105	Alfa Romeo FF 110	Lebanon US 11.75	Qatar US 11.75
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Alfa Romeo FF 130	Alfa Romeo FF 135	Lebanon US 14.25	Qatar US 14.25
Alfa Romeo FF 135	Alfa Romeo FF 140	Lebanon US 14.75	Qatar US 14.75
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Alfa Romeo FF 145	Alfa Romeo FF 150	Lebanon US 15.75	Qatar US 15.75

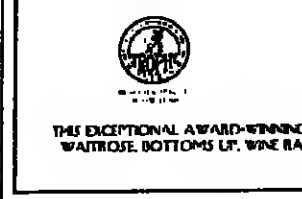
**UK news**

A college head who lost almost £1m promoting offshore courses has won a publicly-funded £158,000 retirement package. Page 7

**International**

Lucian Freud became the most expensive contemporary artist sold at auction in Europe when his Naked Portrait sold for £2.8m. Page 16

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THIS EXCEPTIONAL AWARD-WINNING CHAMPAGNE IS NOW AVAILABLE AT WAITROSE, BOTTOMS UP, WINE BARS AND OTHER QUALITY STOCKISTS



Tomorrow *The Guardian* EUROPE offers the complete package including Saturday, the section which brings you book reviews, arts interviews and features for the weekend. Plus six pages of sport.

• European weather • Television and Radio • Crosswords • Cartoons • Britain's best columnists

## Sketch

## Jabs and jeers tax raging bull



Simon Hoggart

TREASURY Questions opened with the startling news, delivered by the Economic Secretary, Patricia Hewitt, that the Inland Revenue has opened a Museum of Taxation, to mark the 200th anniversary of the invention of income tax.

What a Christmas treat for the youngsters! Displays of early tax returns, the Tax Inspectors' Hall Of Fame, the actual black dress that Ann Mallalieu had disallowed — even though she bought it only for her work as a barrister!

And the gift shop at the exit should be fun for all the family. Joke mats disguised as "tax refund" cheques, "Final Demand" souvenir mugs, and "Soak the Rich" fruit preserves. "We squeezed them till the pips squeaked!"

Gordon Brown missed the announcement; he was attending his father's funeral. This gave everyone more time to concentrate on Geoffrey Robinson.

Poor Mr Robinson resembles an American convict on Death Row. The appeals may go on forever. He could die before he is put to death, so missing his last meal.

On Wednesday the Prime Minister conspicuously failed to offer him outright support. In the silly, almost feline way politicians say something nice about colleagues which nevertheless falls far short of what is required.

Yesterday Mr Robinson sat looking deeply glum, with his arms folded. He makes few appearances in the Commons, so when he does turn up, he is greeted with sarcastic "Ahs" from the Tories.

He said he was pleased to announce that the windfall tax had raised £5.2 billion. "How much was your share?" shouted a Tory.

A gleam appeared in Mr Robinson's eye. He seemed energised by the jeering. "Why

are they against these measures, providing jobs for youngsters and training for youngsters?" he shouted.

Sensing a worrying fight back, the Tories switched into picador mode. The picador is the chap who attacks the bull with a barbed lance in order to drive it mad. The constant twisting and turning weakens the beast, so allowing the matador to pounce about later in comparative safety.

Nick St Aubyn wanted to know what help there would be for the middle-aged unemployed. "Will it extend to unexpectedly unemployed ministers?" Jah.

Nigel Evans referred to Mr Robinson's curious means of publicising himself in the phone book. He inquired what advice he had for people out of work. "Should they advertise their services for hire in the Yellow Pages?" Ouch.

Andrew Robathan asked about the tax affairs of Stenbell Ltd. Surely this tangled web should be investigated by the Treasury? Yet Stenbell was owned by a treasury minister. The hull tried to look as if it didn't care.

Then the matador, Francis Maude, moved in for what was meant to be the kill. It could have been a scene from *Death In The Afternoon*, and I felt like Ernest Hemingway, thrilling to the mingled awe and admiration felt by aficionados of the corrida.

But Mr Maude is no El Cordobes. "The Prime Minister should abandon the search for a face-saving exit for the Paymaster-General and simply sack him." A limp response.

Stephen Byers, the Chief Secretary, was reduced to mumbling that Mr Robinson was "an effective minister; I look forward to working with him for months to come".

The fight had ended in a lame draw. Papa Hemingway would have been outraged.

Finally a weird intervention came from Anne McIntosh. She had come by a Euro note issued by a Belgian bank, which she said, looked very like a Marks & Spencer gift token. What was the Government doing to make sure the documents were not confused?

It sounded like the perfect way out for ministers. We could join monetary union, then if it didn't suit us, we could take the decision back.

## Review

## Guerre closer to being magnifique

Michael Billington

Martin Guerre  
West Yorkshire Playhouse

MUSICALS are not written. They are re-written. And it is hard to believe that the Martin Guerre now occupying this Leeds playhouse is the show that lumbered onto the stage of the Prince Edward 2½ years ago.

It is not, however, as in the story, an identity switch; it is simply hard graft by the creators, Alain Boublil and Claude-Michel Schönberg, and a totally re-conceived production by the dazzling Irish director, Conall Morrison.

The first thing to say is that the story now makes sense, starting on a 1580 battlefield with Martin and his friend, Arnaud, swearing undying love. We then flash back seven years to see Martin, after an unconsummated marriage, driven from the village of Artigat by the primitive locals. After his seeming death in battle, Arnaud arrives in Artigat to report the news but is ineluctably drawn into inheriting both the dead man's identity and his life, Bertrande.

The rest, if not history, will be familiar to anyone who saw either the 1962 French movie or the American remake, *Sommersby*.

My original objection to the show was that it had no centre. Now the focus is clear, posing the Brechtian question of ownership. To whom does Bertrande rightfully belong: to Arnaud whom she loves, or to Martin who is still her legal husband?

The question of ownership recurs: the Artigat Catholics, and this is a strong anti-Catholic show, claim God as theirs, and in consequence persecute the local Protestants with zeal.

In all the changes, the show has acquired four new numbers, the most striking being *If You Still Love Me*, a big romantic number sung, surprisingly, by Martin and Arnaud and suggesting the show is really about male friendship and its betrayal.

Boublil and Schönberg have also followed the golden literary rule of "kill your darlings", asking Working The Land, the centrepiece of the original but thematically irrelevant.

Much of the credit for the turn-around belongs to the production team of Morrison, designer John Napier, choreographer David Bolger, and orchestrator William Brohn. Everything serves the narrative and the idea that we are watching a real community.

John Napier, in particular, comes up with a series of strong central images, including a massive cannon and a torture wheel, and creates the sense of Artigat through nothing more than vertical, sliding, mud-stained wooden boards.

The second half still offers one example too many of heroic self-sacrifice. But the show now has a palpable narrative urgency and there is a strong sense of an unresolved emotional triangle from Matthew Canemelle as a wirily decent Arnaud, from Stephen Weller as the inextinguishable Martin, and from Joanna Riding as Bertrande torn between rival claims.

Gareth Snook also makes a fierce impression as the local priest, bandier with the fall than the rosary.

Played by a nine-strong band and in front of a real audience rather than the usual London premier gang of 31 celebrities, the show proves you can make a silk purse out of a sow's ear not by magic but by unrelenting toil.

# Schröder takes aim at rebate

German leader defies British stance on eve of Vienna summit

Ian Traynor in Bonn, Martin Walker in Vienna and Michael White

GERHARD Schröder arrived in a Thatcher-like mood yesterday for the European Union summit in Vienna, demanding that Germany's budget contribution come down and risking a new British veto threat by insisting that Britain's £2 billion annual rebate be part of negotiations.

"All must be willing to shift on the issues, nobody can push through their maximum demand, and there cannot be any taboo subjects," the German chancellor argued in some of his strongest language yet that Bonn's contributions to Brussels had to be cut.

Mr Schröder said he and Tony Blair had agreed a common position on EU tax policy. "It's about creating uniform tax competition... tax abuse and tax avoidance." He wanted "co-ordination" on direct taxation and "harmonisation" of indirect taxes.

change in Bonn's attitude towards the union and said his presidency would focus on budget reform and jobs pacts.

Although he omitted a passage from his draft speech declaring: "We can't and won't solve Europe's problems with a German chequebook," the chancellor argued in some of his strongest language yet that Bonn's contributions to Brussels had to be cut.

Mr Schröder said he and Tony Blair had agreed a common position on EU tax policy. "It's about creating uniform tax competition... tax abuse and tax avoidance." He wanted "co-ordination" on direct taxation and "harmonisation" of indirect taxes.

The budget negotiations would be extremely difficult because members' interests were so divergent. "That's why it will be important to keep all issues in an overall package," he said. "There can be no taboos, from co-financing [of agriculture] to the British rebate." Stating that Germany's £2 billion net contribution to Brussels was 60 per cent of the net budget, he said there was "something rotten" about the EU bill.

Spain stands to be the biggest loser if Germany succeeds in scaling back its payments, and the Spanish press has been preparing its readers for "the battle of the Congress of Vienna".

But Britain now also faces difficulty, after stating repeatedly that the rebate won by Mrs Thatcher was "not open to negotiation". Britain had tried to outflank the issue, by proposing a budget freeze that would let the EU spend no more in 2006 than it did this year. Although Germany has backed the plan, Mr Schröder is now insisting that even within current spending, Germany's share must come down.

Downing Street sees the fight to save its rebate as a test of Mr Blair's virility. Britain would not be "steam-rollered", the Cabinet Office's enforcer, Dr Jack Cunningham, said last night.

Britain's backing for Germany's call to save the duty-free trade may have success, but is unlikely to deflect Mr Schröder from his main purpose.

"I don't think it should become an ugly discussion. I think it is important that it is resolved on the basis of fairness," the Prime Minister said yesterday, in an interview with an Austrian newspaper. But he made it clear he would fight to keep the rebate.

The reason for the British rebate is because of the way the Common Agricultural Policy works, and because even after the rebate Britain is one of the big net contributors," he said.

Pinochet's lawyers set pincer as they launch unprecedented bid to overturn law lords' extradition ruling

## Legal plot takes on added twists

Jamie Wilson and Elizabeth Love in Santiago

THE Pinochet affair yesterday moved into uncharted legal territory when lawyers acting for the former Chilean dictator launched an unprecedented bid to overturn the law lords' ruling that he could be tried for human rights abuses.

The move came as the Spanish judge seeking the extradition of the general formally charged Pinochet with crimes against humanity and asked for a freeze of his assets worldwide.

Last night lawyers at the House of Lords were grappling with how to deal with the appeal, which was lodged at the judicial office. It is unprecedented in legal history for a House of Lords ruling to be challenged in this way and procedures for how to handle the appeal are having to be formulated.

Because the House of Lords is the highest court in the land, there is no higher court to which Pinochet's lawyers could appeal.

It was thought that the petition could be considered by either a panel of three law lords or by a full committee.

Michael Caplan of Kingsley Napley, Pinochet's solicitors, said: "Having carefully considered all the recent developments, we can confirm we have lodged a petition with the House of Lords that the decision of their Lordships that Senator Pinochet does not have sovereign immunity should not be allowed to stand."

Mr Caplan added that they were still considering applying for judicial review of



An Amnesty International supporter takes part in an anti-Pinochet demonstration at the Home Office in London yesterday. PHOTOGRAPH: MARTIN ARFELS

Wednesday's decision by the Home Secretary, Jack Straw, to issue a peace to proceed in the case.

Mr Caplan declined to expand on the grounds cited in the petition, although these are believed to relate to allegations of bias or perceived bias against one of the law lords, Lord Hoffmann, who has links with Amnesty International.

In his ruling on Wednesday, Mr Straw explicitly dismissed representations by Pinochet's lawyers that there was any bias in the law lord's decision.

Amnesty last night said

that a letter sent to the law firm asking for donations towards the building of a new Amnesty HQ in London detailed Lord Hoffmann's links with Amnesty International Charity. Kingsley Napley had donated £1,000 to the appeal.

"We are surprised that Kingsley Napley have left it until now to challenge Lord Hoffmann's involvement in the Pinochet case," a spokesman for Amnesty said last night.

The appeal to the House of Lords is not expected to affect today's bail hearing at Westminster magistrates' court, in south London, where Pino-

chet is due to make his first public appearance since his arrest.

A date for a committal hearing, when a magistrate will rule on the Spanish extradition request, is expected to be set at today's hearing.

In Spain the 285-page criminal indictment, drafted by the campaigning judge Baltasar Garçon, charges the general with genocide, torture and terrorism. It accuses Pinochet of being responsible for the deaths or "disappearance" of more than 3,000 people during his 17 year rule.

The judge also issued a formal request for a freeze on

Pinochet's bank accounts and other assets worldwide. Court sources said the measure was taken to prevent Pinochet and his family from hiding funds that might be needed to pay fines or legal fees if the case goes to trial.

The political fall-out of Mr Straw's decision continued in Chile as the government played down statements by the military and called for a "united front" in efforts to bring Pinochet back and then calling the ruling in favour of extradition a "triumph for human rights."

Pinchot's detention is straining relations within Chile's governing centre-left alliance. Members of the larger Christian Democratic Party have accused Socialist party members of straddling the fence by supporting official efforts to bring Pinochet back and then calling the ruling in favour of extradition a "triumph for human rights."

The defence minister, Jose Florencio Guzman, said that Wednesday's statements by the military in support of Pinochet and the 17-year mili-

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Lotters, page 13

## £1 bn hurricane lifeline

World Bank makes loan offer, but Paris Club fails to write off debts

Charlotte Denny in Paris

THE World Bank yesterday threw a lifeline to Honduras and Nicaragua offering \$1 billion (about £600 million) in concessional interest-free loans to help the region repair the damage caused by Hurricane Mitch.

However, the offer came after a separate meeting of creditor governments in Paris disappointed aid agencies by refusing to consider an immediate write-off of the countries' existing foreign debt. The Paris Club, which represents western governments owed money by third world countries, said it was granting Honduras and Nicaragua a three-year moratorium on repayments on their crippling foreign loans.

It said the decision would free up significant budgetary resources for the countries and help them to finance reconstruction. But the club

is not planning any extra debt release beyond what the countries are entitled to under existing international programmes.

Aid agencies said the Paris Club's decision, while a welcome breathing space, was a "stay of execution" rather than a solution to the region's debt burden.

"It still leaves the countries trapped in a debtor's prison," said Andrew Simms, of Christian Aid.

The agencies would like to see the \$10.4 billion the two countries owe to western governments and international lending bodies cancelled rather than rescheduled.

Announcing the World Bank decision at a meeting of international donors in Washington, the bank's president, James Wolfensohn, said: "The international community must continue to support the people and governments of central America in overcoming the challenges they now face."

The United Nations has estimated that the bill for rebuilding the countries will come to at least \$5 billion.

Honduras owes Paris Club countries just over \$1 billion, while Nicaragua owes more than \$1.5 billion.

In yesterday's statement the 20-member organisation agreed to write off up to two-thirds of Honduras's debt once it agrees a programme of fiscal belt tightening with the International Monetary Fund.

Nicaragua will have up to 80 per cent of its debts forgiven under an existing World Bank programme for the most heavily indebted countries, but is unlikely to qualify for at least three years until it has completed its current IMF agreement.

Aid agencies said making debt cancellation conditional on sticking to the IMF's rigid prescriptions was a slap in the face for the two countries.

"To put that kind of burden on top of a country which has been destroyed is quite shocking," said Angela Travis of the Jubilee 2000 coalition, which is seeking to have unpayable third world debt cancelled by the millennium.

Oxfam said the World Bank's debt relief programme was insufficient to bring the two countries' debts down to a sustainable level even before the hurricane struck.

"An extraordinary situation prevails in Central America which requires extraordinary measures to address it, as it stands, creditors are proposing business as usual," said Tony Burden from Oxfam.

The agencies also criticised the IMF for increasing Honduras's debt burden by offering further loans to pay for rebuilding after the disaster. On Monday the fund announced it had agreed a \$55 million loan for Honduras at commercial interest rates.

Mr Simms said the move was a sign that the IMF was out of step with the other international lending bodies who have rushed in aid and concessional loans.

"The creditors need to use this breathing space to co-ordinate their approach. Over the next 12 months they should sit down and work out the full resources required for reconstruction and poverty reduction."

## Transplant man regains touch

Jon Henley in Paris

THE world's first hand transplant recipient, Clint Hallam, said yesterday he was preparing to return home to Australia, having regained the sense of touch in his fingers three months after the groundbreaking operation at a Lyons hospital.

Mr Hallam, a New Zealand-born businessman, said he was convinced he would eventually gain full use of the transplant and thanked those "who helped me realise the dream I've had since 1989," when he lost his hand in a circular saw accident.

"The progress made is really quite staggering," he said. "Sensation is just starting to arrive in the fingertips. The strength within the muscles is still a little restricted, but it is certainly regaining the normal strength of my hand."

In the operation on September 25, an international team of doctors at

Edouard Herriot hospital in Lyons sewed the hand of an unidentified brain-dead man on to Mr Hallam's right arm. It was the first such operation attempted since the 1960s, when a hand transplant patient in Ecuador kept his new hand only two weeks.

Mr Hallam, aged 48, was released from hospital in mid-October and has since been convalescing and undergoing check-ups and therapy at the hospital once a week. His doctor, Jean-Michel Dubernard, said his body was adjusting well to the new hand and that he could return to Perth before or shortly after Christmas.

But the New Zealand-born businessman, who was serving a two-year prison sentence for fraud when the saw accident happened, may yet have to face a judge after returning home. Australian papers have said he is to appear before a court in January on seven different charges of fraud in relation to a marketing investment scam.

JP's 100150



## Cancer: the high-risk diets and lifestyles

Cancer type/site	High risk foods	Foods that lessen risk	Other risks	Health enhancing
Colorectal	Red meat, processed meat	Vegetables, non-starch polysaccharides (fibre)	Obesity	Physical activity
Stomach	Alcohol, red meat, pickled vegetables	Vegetables	Late menopause, late pregnancy, obesity	Physical activity
Lung			Smoking, occupation	Physical activity
Prostate		Vitamin E		
Endometrium			Smoking	
Pancreas			Smoking	
Liver	Alcohol		Smoking, occupation	

Deaths from all cancers in England and Wales, 1996  
Men: 72,464 Women: 66,995

### What to do

- Do not smoke
- Take regular exercise
- Do not be sexually promiscuous
- Avoid prolonged exposure to direct sunlight
- Avoid hepatitis B and C risks

### What to eat and drink

- Eat plenty of fruit and vegetables (at least five portions a day)
- Eat plenty of cereal foods, mainly in an unprocessed form (as a source of non-starch polysaccharides)
- Maintain ideal body weight (body mass index 20-25), avoid fatty foods
- Eat red meat and processed meat in moderation (no more than 140g a day)
- Avoid high doses of vitamin supplements
- Alcohol in moderation (a maximum of two units a day for women and three units a day for men)
- Avoid highly salted and mouldy foods

## BBC news decision prompts Scots rage

Gerard Seaman

**T**HE BBC yesterday rejected proposals for a Scottish version of the Six O'Clock News in a move that infuriated nationalist politicians and the media establishment north of the border.

The board of governors announced it would not accept BBC Scotland's petition to produce its own Six O'Clock News, preferring instead to invest £10 million in the Scottish news operations.

Nationalist politicians described the move as arrogant. "This is the wrong decision for Scotland and the wrong decision for the BBC. It is arrogant and high-handed and flies in the face of the Scottish consensus," said SNP broadcast spokesperson, Roseanna Cunningham.

In a compromise gesture, the governors instead said the extra cash would create 60 jobs and improve coverage of Scotland in a revamped hour-long Six O'Clock News — to be called The Evening News Hour — on the national network.

Baroness Young, vice-chair of the BBC governors, said the new package was the correct response to devolution. "Reporting accurately the developments within Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales is important, but reporting that to the BBC is a whole is also important," she said.

Under the package announced yesterday, viewers in Scotland will also opt out of BBC2's Newsnight at 11pm in favour of a 20-minute, Glasgow-produced current affairs programme. Scottish viewers will receive much greater dedicated current affairs coverage — and analysts say the door to a Scottish Six O'Clock News remains ajar.

It is understood that the BBC governors refused to go ahead for it because they feared it would be seen as stripping political momentum in Scotland and would be used as potent symbolism by the nationalists.

Tony Blair and the Chancellor, Gordon Brown, were both implacably opposed to the idea, and, along with other Scottish members of the Cabinet, have been accused by the SNP of having words in

**This decision is arrogant and flies in the face of the Scottish consensus**

the governors said they were not minded to allow the Scottish Six to go ahead, said he was astonished at the intrusiveness of the governors and denied that there was anything new about the investment package.

Professor Paterson said the decision to opt out of the latter part of Newsnight effectively buried Scottish news in the dead of night when most viewers would be in bed.

The Scottish Conservative leader, David McLetchie, said he believed the BBC was making a grave mistake. A recent poll in the Glasgow-based Herald newspaper suggested that around two thirds of people in Scotland were in favour of a Scottish Six. Some campaigners have vowed to seek judicial review of the BBC's decision. But, in the meantime, London-based journalists will embark on training courses to bring them up to speed with events in Scotland and other parts of the UK.

## Right diet may help prevent cancer

The British approach to food is causing major health problems, according to new research.  
**Sarah Boseley reports**

**U**P TO 90 per cent of all breast cancers could be prevented if people improved their eating habits, according to scientists at Cambridge University.

John Cummings and colleagues at the Clinical Nutrition Centre believe that neither the public nor doctors take diet seriously enough. The British way of nourishment, with its emphasis on meat, processed food like sausages, and dearth of fruit and vegetables, is causing the nation's major health problems, they say, and may be the reason why cancer rates in the UK are far higher than they are in other places, such as the Mediterranean.

Their study, published in the British Medical Journal, looks at the biological evidence which suggests that cancers can be caused by the food we eat. In each type of cancer, there are other risk

factors, such as smoking, obesity, infections, sexual behaviour and exposure to sunlight, but "food and drink has a part to play in many, if not all cancers, albeit to a variable extent."

In general, their message is that red and processed meat and alcohol increase the risk of cancer, while fruit, vegetables and fibre have a protective effect. They say there is no evidence that vitamin supplements help prevent cancer and advise people that high doses can sometimes be harmful.

In March this year, a row broke out when the Government's Committee on the Medical Aspects of Food (COMA) produced a report on diet and cancer. They were accused of making a U-turn in a desire "not to damage" the meat industry further when they recommended that anyone who eats more than 140 grammes (five ounces) of red meat a day — or 14 portions a

week — should consider cutting down.

Average meat-eaters need not change their habits, they advised, even though the Health Secretary, Frank Dobson, had said six months earlier that they should. The World Cancer Research Fund at the same time said people should not eat more than 80 grammes (2.8 ounces) a day.

The Dunn scientists have kept their distance from arguments over the exact quantity that is safe, although they note that 15 per cent of consumers, mainly men, eat more meat than the Department of Health advises. But their research effectively strengthens the health message that changes in diet are needed.

"High consumption of meat, especially red meat and processed meat, is linked with higher risk of bowel, breast, prostate and pancreatic cancer," they say. "There is some evidence of an association with lung cancer, and of an association of barbecued meat and oesophageal cancer."

We should be eating far more fruit and vegetables, they say. "What is remarkable about the diet-cancer story is the consistency with

### 'Consumption of vegetables and fruit in Britain is less than half that in Mediterranean populations'

increase from 12g a day to 18g a day, but with fibre, changes take 20 to 40 to 50 years."

The poor British diet was a stark contrast with many other countries. "Mediterranean countries take less interest in a healthy diet than we do, but they already eat a pretty healthy one." Few people had changed their habits in the UK in spite of being told that fruit and vegetables are good for them. The study

found different dietary risks for different cancers, although the overall conclusions on meat and vegetables held for them all. Fat in the diet has not been confirmed as a risk factor for breast cancer, but "both meat and alcohol are associated with increased risk."

The evidence is strongest in colorectal (bowel) cancer, they say. "People who report eating greater amounts of red and processed meat are at higher risk of colorectal cancer. Red meat is taken to mean beef, pork and lamb in roasts, steaks, and processed meats including sausages, ham-burgers, smoked cured and salted meat (including ham and bacon), and canned meat."

The authors conclude that a better diet would protect not only against cancer but also other diseases, such as heart disease, hypertension and diabetes. "Further, a plant-based food economy is much more sustainable than one based on livestock. Provided that other lifestyle factors are also taken into account, the diet for cancer prevention can, on the basis of current knowledge, form the basis for a rational public health policy."

## Tory peers go behind Hague's back again over Euro voting bill

Even MacKillop, Chief Political Correspondent

**T**ORY peers delivered a snub to their party leader William Hague yesterday by going behind his back again to agree another secret deal with the Government.

Conservative leaders in the Lords made a pact with their Government counterparts to allow through the contentious European election bill, which was the subject of a Lords-Commons ping-pong battle last month.

The bill, which the Lords sent back to the Commons five times, is now scheduled to become law by the end of January in time for the European Parliament election in June, to be held for the first time under proportional representation.

As part of the deal, peers

will receive an extended Christmas and New Year holiday. Instead of returning on Tuesday January 5, they will remain on holiday until Monday, January 11.

The deal, described by a Tory peer as a "chap's agreement", was supposed to remain secret. But the Prime Minister's official spokesman disclosed it at a Downing Street briefing for journalists yesterday morning.

He said Lord Carter, the Government Chief Whip in the Lords, had informed the Cabinet yesterday morning a timetable had been secured for the bill, which goes to the Lords on Tuesday.

Mr Hague earlier this month was bypassed by the Tory leadership in the Lords under Lord Cranborne, who was subsequently sacked.

Although Lord Strathclyde, the new Tory leader in the Lords, maintained that Mr

Hague had been kept informed of the new deal, other Tory sources disputed this. Under the closed list system of PR introduced in the bill, the parties will have huge powers of patronage, listing their preferred candidates.

Although the Tories will vote against the bill, they have crucially promised under the timetable agreement not to filibuster it.

The Government would be in trouble if there was a filibuster but can handle a lost vote by invoking the Parliament Act and get the bill on the Statute Book by late January. Agreement on the timetable was reached between the two parties' chief whips.

Lord Strathclyde last night wrote to Lord Carter, protesting at the agreement being made public and threatening to break off relations if there were any further breaches.

Lord MacKay of Ardbreck-

## Trimble and Hume receive Nobels

continued from page 1

an optician. His lecture, though peppered with references to philosophers, was more nuts and bolts. He used the world stage to keep his own constituency in order, telling Sinn Féin that the IRA had to disarm.

Mr Trimble said: "In Ulster, what I have looked for is peace within the realms of the possible. We could only have started from where we actually were, not from where we would have liked to be."

"And we have started. And we will go on. And we will go

on all the better if we walk rather than run. If we put aside fantasy and accept the flawed nature of human enterprises. Sometimes we will stumble. This need not matter."

The Ulster Unionist leader, aged 64, had put no pressure on the paramilitaries over how they decommissioned. All he wanted was a credible beginning, and it was not too much to ask that Mr Hume's SDLP support him in that.

"Common sense dictates that I cannot forever convince society that the real peace is

at hand if there is not a beginning to the decommissioning of weapons," he said.

But, though the two laureates avoided direct contact, their families and guests began to mingle after the ceremony, in the foyer of the Grand Hotel, Daphne Trimble, aged 44, and Pat Hume, aged 60, giggled like old friends.

Both had been terrified as their husbands' big day dawned, and close to tears during the presentation.

Mr Hume's aunt, Bella Kerrigan, aged 79, from the Bog-

side in Derry, admitted she had cried. Trimble's son Nicholas, aged 11, confessed he had met Mr Hume on the plane to Oslo. "He is a very nice man. I liked him."

There was a telling moment in one interview. When the laureates were asked whether they were friends, there was a long pause, before Mr Trimble swallowed hard and offered: "We have a good working relationship."

There is one matter that unites them still. Neither has decided what to do with the \$200,000 prize money.

**Yet it is public knowledge that Iranian films are censored, and that the directors who get their films made have to tread a delicate, elliptical line. What is less well known is that the films emerging from Iran are the finest in the world.**  
Simon Hattenstone on Iran's youngest film director

## Friday Review, page ii

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White paper aims to cut number of smokers by 1.5 million □ Ban on smoking in workplace rejected □ Sarah Boseley reports

# Dobson declares war on tobacco

**T**HE Government declared war on tobacco yesterday, with a white paper that set targets for cutting the number of smokers by 1.5 million and promised a £20 million campaign to persuade children not to start smoking and adults to quit.

But some campaigners were disappointed. They wanted tougher action faster, regretted the absence of a smoking ban in public places and an immediate advertising ban, instead of one that starts "soon", and criticised the funding available. But as the first draft bill against tobacco, the white paper was welcomed.

In the Commons, the Health Secretary, Frank Dobson, said he intended to protect children from the tobacco industry, which needs 120,000 new young smokers every year — virtually no body starts smoking in middle age.

"For years, the tobacco industry has poured millions into highly sophisticated advertising campaigns. People of all ages, including children, have been exposed to clever and eye-catching advertising," he said. "All that will now change. Tobacco advertising is going to end and it's going to end soon."

The number of children starting to smoke is rising, while the number of adult smokers has stopped falling. The Government, which pledged £100 million over three years to counter smoking, set separate progress targets for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. In England, it wants to reduce smoking among children



from 13 per cent to 9 per cent or less by 2010, which will mean 110,000 fewer children smoking. The target for adults is from 28 per cent to 24 per cent by 2010, a drop of 1.5 million. It wants to cut smoking among pregnant women by 55,000, from 23 per cent to 18 per cent by 2010.

"Smoking is now the principal avoidable cause of premature deaths in Britain," said Mr Dobson. "It hits the worst off hardest of all. Smoking is

one of the principal causes of the health gap which leads to poorer people being ill more often and dying sooner. Smoking harms people who do not smoke. Smoking harms babies in the womb."

But it would be "an uphill struggle," he warned, "because the tobacco companies are committed to doing everything they can to promote the sale of cigarettes."

There was some disappointment from the British Medical Association. "The Govern-

ment has taken an historic first step against the tobacco industry, but its approach is more tentative and less courageous than doctors hoped for," said Ian Bogle, BMA chairman. It was disappointed a ban on smoking in the workplace had been rejected.

The Health Service Confederation said the smoking cessation programme, which will focus on counselling and nicotine patches for the poorest in

areas already designated as "health action zones," was inadequately funded. "The Government has announced £50 million for these advice clinics which is meagre given the massive hidden smoking-related illnesses place on the NHS," said Stephen Thornton, its chief executive.

The Royal College of Physicians was delighted with a government prepared to implement "policies which may be unpopular but which will

save lives," said its president, George Alberti, but it would have liked smoking in public places banned. The Institute of Health Services Management said the paper did not go far enough. "The overall costs of smoking are too high to excuse a cautious approach," said Suzanne Tyler, deputy director.

Clive Bates, director of Action on Smoking and Health, said it was delighted at "the first serious and broad-

based assault on the appalling burden of illness, addiction and death caused by tobacco since scientists first warned of the dangers 40 years ago."

Organisations representing pubs and restaurants, which will sign a voluntary charter offering no-smoking areas, were delighted.

PHOTOGRAPH: MARTIN GODWIN

Leader comment, page 12

## Main points

**Action to protect children and young people:**

- Legislation in 1999/00 parliament to end tobacco advertising on billboards
- Minimal tobacco advertising to be allowed in shops
- Under-age sales clampdown
- Proposals for a proof of age card for young smokers
- Cigarette machines sited so as not to attract children

**An NHS smoking cessation programme:**

- GPs' referrals of would-be non-smokers to counselling
- Discretionary, free, one-week's nicotine replacement therapy. Pregnant women a priority.

**Nationwide campaign:**

- £20 million anti-smoking marketing campaign

**A "clean air" charter:**

- Smoking and non-smoking areas in pubs and restaurants
- National targets for smoke-free zones in public places
- Scheme to "badge" bars and restaurants with smoke-free zones
- Health and Safety Commission to consult in spring 1999 on protecting employees from smoke at work

**International action:**

- £35 million extra to combat tobacco smuggling
- Support for World Health Organisation's anti-tobacco work

## Shake-up of housing benefit proposed

David Brindle, Social Services Correspondent

**T**HE Government plans to limit cash support for services for elderly and vulnerable people living in the community, giving local authorities the job of deciding who should get help.

Consultative proposals published yesterday would end the system of open-ended funding of support through housing benefit. Councils would be allocated up to £750 million a year to disburse according to need.

The move would cut the spiralling housing benefit bill by as much as £500 million, leaving it to meet strictly bricks-and-mortar costs.

In a novel departure, councils would be "fined" a portion of their funding if they failed to reach agreement among housing, social and probation services on how it should be spent. The Government would withhold a por-

tion and allocate the rest direct to the competing groups.

Councils and housing groups were doubtful about the proposals. They feared that some of the 700,000 people at present receiving support services could lose out.

Paul Lautman, assistant head of housing at the Local Government Association, said: "Many people need just a little bit of support to continue living independently. Housing benefit does that very effectively."

The proposals involve people in sheltered and supported housing. Support services range from an alarm system and resident warden, costing a few pounds a week, to intensive, non-cure help with personal affairs, costing in excess of £100.

Housing benefit was never intended to meet such costs. The Conservative government tried to restrict it to bricks-and-mortar costs but

backed off in the face of a storm of protest.

Since then the courts have ruled that benefit can only be used to pay for support and counselling relating to the fabric of a dwelling. The Government has had to introduce emergency regulations to protect people affected.

Alistair Darling, Social Security Secretary, yesterday said the proposals would set up a single, clear budget for support services in place of a patchwork of arrangements.

The Government at present had no control over the quality or cost of services. "The new arrangements will enable many thousands of vulnerable people to get the cost-effective and high quality services which they need."

Under the proposals, the Government would pass responsibility to local government from 2003. Transitional arrangements, including a power to bear down on high cost services, would apply from next November.

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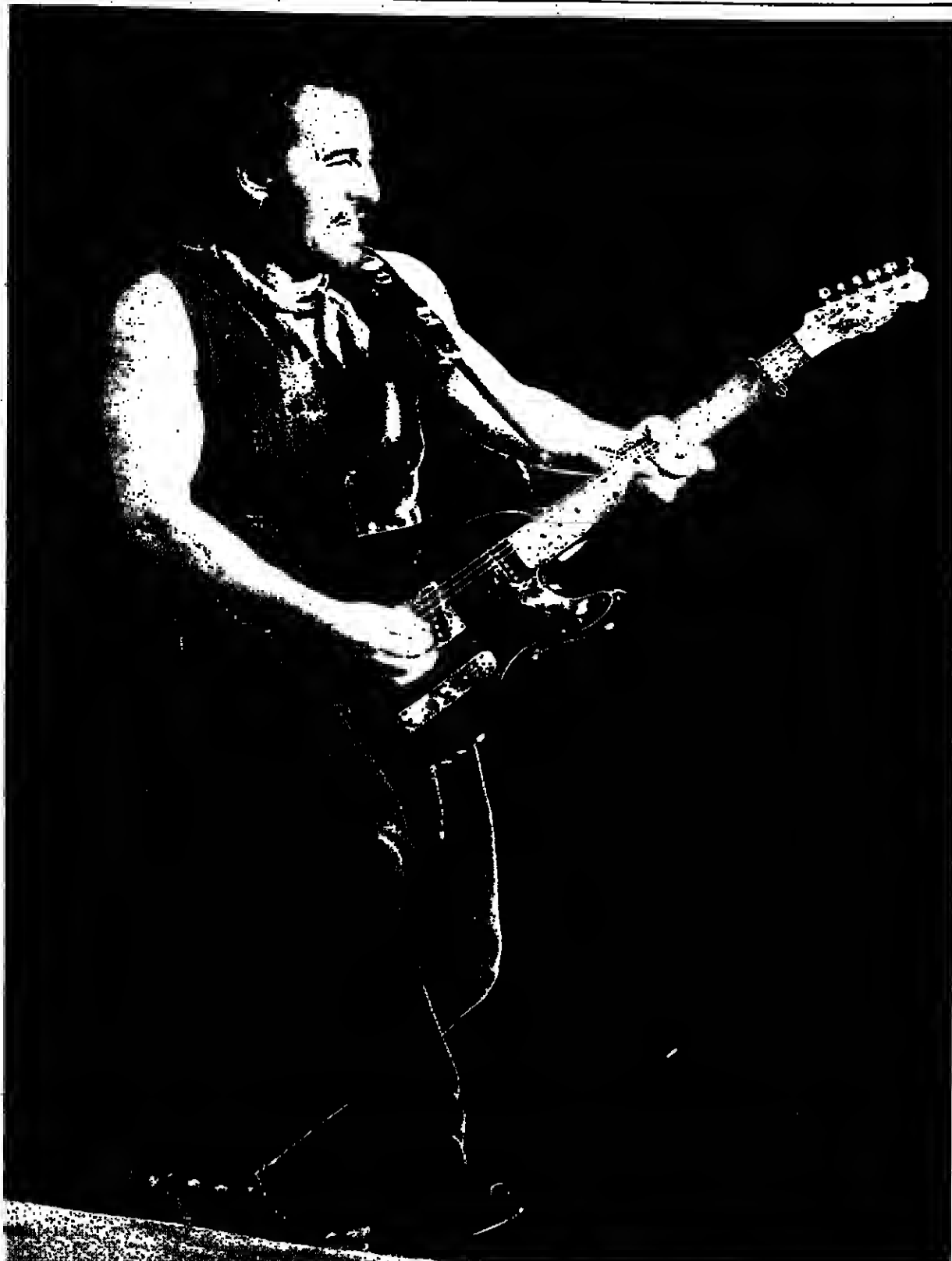
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Bruce Springsteen in action on stage and (right) after his court success against Masquerade Music, which was banned from releasing an album of songs recorded before he became a star

## Rock star shows he is Boss in winning suit over copyright

Audrey Gillan on Bruce Springsteen's victory over a British music company

**E**VEN though he knew what was coming, Bruce Springsteen sat pensively in the front row of court 17 in the High Court, London, yesterday. As he waited for Mr Justice Ferris to give his judgment over rights to his music, his eyes were blinking and his bottom lip protruded.

The American rock star was aware the judge had decided that he owned the copyright to his songs, but when it was over he was clearly delighted. He had won a complicated civil suit against a British company he had accused of pirating his music.

After signing autographs in the courtroom doorway, Mr Springsteen, aged 36, was ushered out by bodyguards to a corner of the marble hallway where, in his characteristic hoarse voice, he told journalists: "I am very glad to come here and defend my right to my music, which is something I have fought for since I was young."

"The music that you release is the way you shape your career. It's a big part of what you say and the way that you say it. It's an artistic question and an aesthetic judgment and it should be left up to the songwriter."

Eschewing his trademark blue jeans and jacket, the man known to his fans as the Boss had donned a trim black suit, grey shirt and burgundy tie with white pinhead dots.

A concession to his rock star status was the little silver cross in his left ear and the two silver studs, one in each lobe.

He continued: "The music you write is what you do sitting alone in your room late at night with your guitar — it's one of the most personal things in your life. I hope this will be a deterrent. It's a lot of hard work. I am glad that I



did it, and I wouldn't hesitate to do it again."

At the conclusion of a case that spanned 2½ years, Mr Springsteen won the right to pursue up to £2 million in damages and won his costs, estimated at £500,000.

"I didn't come here for the money, I came here for the music," he said before heading for Paris and last night's concert for Amnesty International.

Mr Justice Ferris granted him an injunction preventing Masquerade Music from releasing an album of 19 songs that he wrote and recorded in 1972, before he became a star. The company's owner, Ron Winter, has been prevented from copying any songs from the album, provisionally titled *Before the Fame*.

The singer had originally sued Flute International, a Bristol company, for releasing an album of the same songs, *Uncarved*, but that company was now in liquidation. He was given leave to sue its owner, Robert Trigbum, for damages.

The judge said Mr Springsteen looked exceptional in the release of the songs. The singer had considered the matter to be substantial.

He ruled that Mr Springsteen was the owner of the copyright to the words and music of all 19 songs and of copyright to sound recordings in 14 of them, with the other five belonging to Sony.

The singer's counsel, Nigel Davis QC, told the judge at a hearing in October that the early recordings, which had never been legitimately released, were valuable because of his client's huge global following. He owned the copyright to the songs, and Masquerade's attempt to claim ownership and release the recordings was an attack on his artistic integrity.

PHOTOGRAPHS: RICHARD SELLERS (above) and Kieran Doherty



The Guardian's Christmas appeal offers readers the chance to donate to up to eight charities. Today **John Mullin** reports on the work of Habitat for Humanity Belfast



Jeanette Ratkevicius on the site where her new Habitat for Humanity Belfast home will be built in Protestant Glencairn. The charity aims to bring the communities together

### The charity

Habitat for Humanity Belfast is a cross-community housing charity. Its aim is to build simple, affordable housing in partnership with low income families and volunteers. It provides interest-free mortgages, allowing those otherwise unable to buy a house to take a stake in their communities.

It is the offshoot of Habitat for Humanity International, founded in 1976. It has built 60,000 homes in more than 50 countries.

HFB's remit is to help break down the barriers. It has built 11 houses in Catholic west Belfast and is constructing 16 in a Protestant area. Volunteers from both communities work

across the peace line, and the aim is to build development on the front line, where Catholics and Protestants will live side by side.

Houses are built by volunteers who donate materials. Each home owner must put in 400 hours of what the charity calls "sweat equity". The houses are much cheaper than those built by developers, currently about £27,000, but are built to exacting standards.

## Building bridges and homes in Belfast

**H**ER ready, throaty chuckle gives scant enough clue, but Rita Carson has had a tough life. She has seen both her husband and eldest son die. Her other three boys have had five kidney transplants between them.

Mrs Carson, aged 58, and her family suffer from a rare genetic kidney disorder, Alport's Syndrome. It killed her 14-year-old son, Jim, 23 years ago. Her sister fell victim to the condition too. When her brother-in-law was unable to cope with their five children, Rita decided to bring them up — along with her four boys and daughter, Bernadette.

"There was never much decision," she said. "It was a hard time. But you just did what you did in those days, and got on with it."

Then there was another blow. Her husband, Jim, suc-

cumbed to leukaemia, 18 months after the death of their son. She was forced to bring up the 10 children alone, in a tiny box room.

She got lucky. The family was assigned a council house in Beechmount, west Belfast, a fervently nationalist area. She can still see it from the patio doors of her new home. It is a derelict wreck, bricked up and burned out by vandals. Mrs Carson is still in Beechmount, one of the poorest areas in the city, but she now lives in her own three-bedroom house, part of a remarkable cross-community project aimed at giving those in dire need a decent home and encouraging them to take responsibility instead of relying on handouts.

Habitat for Humanity Belfast, an offshoot of an American charity, builds houses in Catholic and Protestant areas. There are already 11 homes in

Iris Mews, where Mrs Carson lives, and 16 more are going up in Glencairn, a staunchly loyalist area.

The charity's aims are threefold. It seeks to provide decent housing for those in need; to give them an element of self-reliance by providing interest-free mortgages for houses they must help build; and to break down barriers between communities.

Mrs Carson, who lives with her second husband, Joe, says: "It is a world of difference. The old place was an awful house, really dark. We pay \$36 a week for a mortgage. It gives you more responsibility and self-respect. It helps create a real sense of community."

Mrs Carson, who is now bringing up her six-year-old granddaughter, Kasey, is pleased at the cross-community aspect. She used to take 50 Catholic children at a time to

British army camps. Her late son also went to school on the loyalist Shankill Road, and she is proud none of her children became involved with terrorism.

Each home is built from donated materials. The foundations, plumbing and electrics are all the responsibility of tradesmen. Everything else is down to volunteers overseen by supervisors.

The Belfast operation began in 1994, before the first IRA ceasefire. The climate was much more tense in Northern Ireland then and the charity, which has a strong Christian element, had to work hard to gain the trust of the locals.

A so-called blitz build helped. Two of the houses were completed within five days, and this sparked interest. The charity repeated the experiment at Glencairn when it began its development there last May. This

time building four houses in two weeks. The rest should be completed in the next year.

While Protestants worked on the houses in nationalist Beechmount, Catholics now regularly cross the peace line to help out in Glencairn. They would never have dared before. Alongside a former IRA man who used to turn Protestants out of their homes a former British soldier works. They are the best of friends.

Peter Farquharson, executive director, now plans to buy land right on the front line between both communities. He wants to begin a development where Catholics and Protestants live side by side.

The aim is to break down the long-standing religious apartheid signified by flagstones daubed in tribal colours. No one would bet against Habitat for Humanity Belfast pulling it off.

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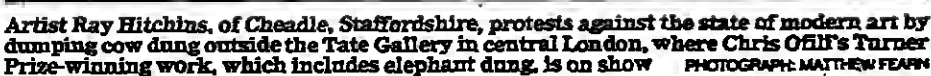
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and bad. I can actually look at my over and Dad goes back to Miami—ridiculous anybody. But I didn't want to become as wide as a road in the end. the cycle. I want to make a pay

**Janine Gibson**  
**Media Correspondent**

BBC2 controller Mark Thompson, since promoted to BBC director of regional and national broadcasting.

Also headed for Friday nights is the eighth series of the cult sci-fi comedy **Red Dwarf**.



### James Mack in Moscow

One of the journalists who

The territory's Soviet-era phone network, along with much of the country's infrastructure, was destroyed in

In the anarchic world of the north Caucasus, the border-aries between business rivalry, squabbles over ownership of hostages, politics, clan rivalry and religious feuding, are hazy. It is possible that the kidnappers of the Granger employees — or another group who held them as hostages — were also involved in religious politics. They may have seen the literature of fringe post-Soviet Islam, particularly a popular pamphlet entitled *Confessions of an English Spy*.

**Ian Black**  
**Diplomatic Editor**

**Tripoli's refusal to hand over the suspects, on the grounds that they would not receive a fair trial in Scotland**

"The two accused, even if found guilty, could only be small minnows in a very large pond," Dr Swire said. "I see nothing on the horizon that would make me alter my opinion, which is that the handover will definitely occur, and that it will occur within the next few weeks. We have been patient for the past 10 years, we can wait a bit longer."

Mr. Annan said after Saturday's talks that he was expecting a decision from Libya in the near future. But there was confusion yesterday after the country's justice minister said a Libyan legal team intended to seek further clarification of the proposed trial from the UN legal counsel.

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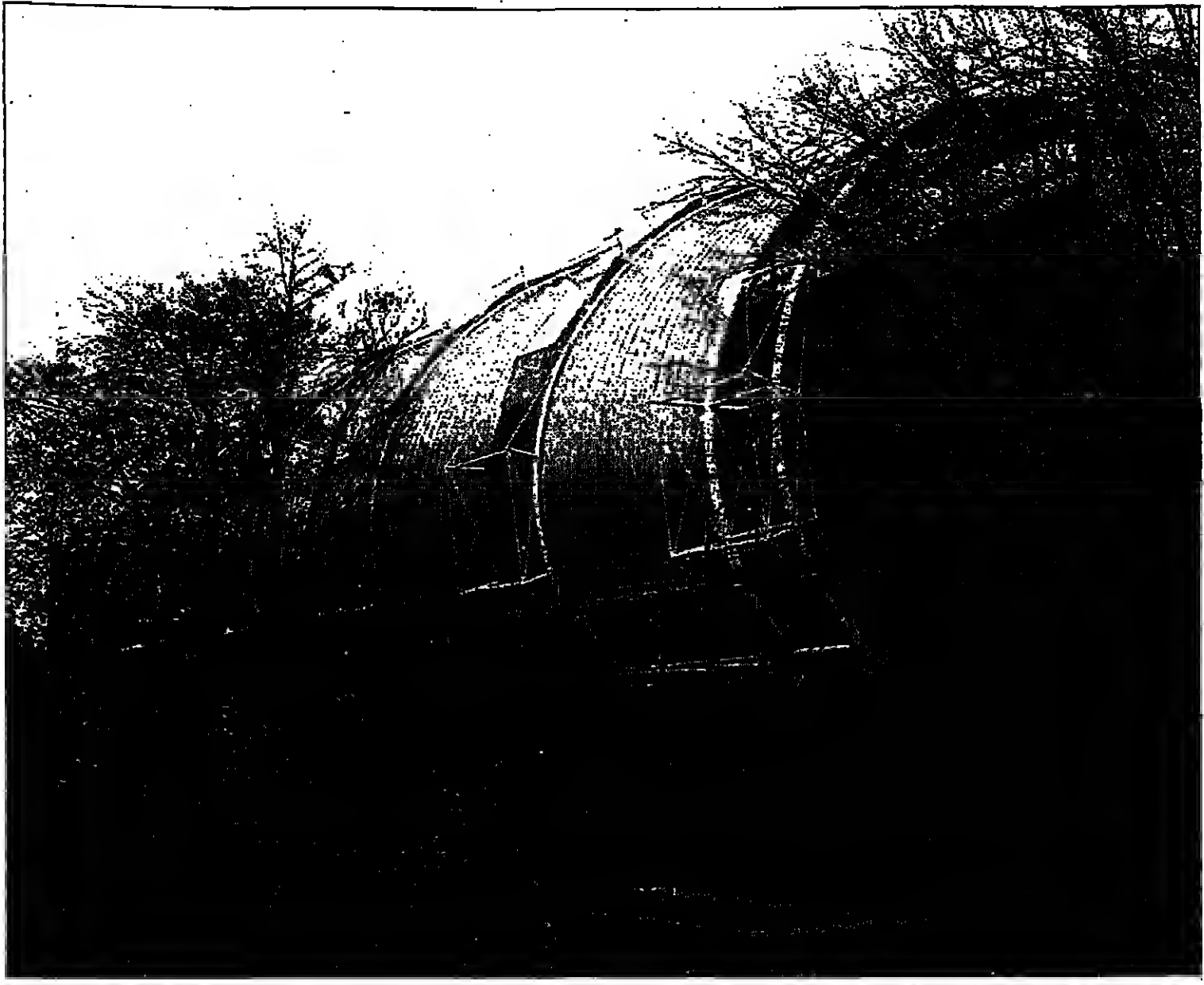
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The new magistrates court in Southampton. Detractors complain that it is out of keeping with neighbouring listed buildings. PHOTOGRAPH: TIM OCKENEN

## Brickbats flung at 'Nissen hut' courthouse

Geoffrey Gibbs

ARCHITECTS and conservationists are locked in a war of words over a futuristic court building nearing completion in an historic city. Opponents have likened the new magistrates court in Southampton to a Nissen hut and claim that the £13 million building is out of keeping with neighbouring, mainly 19th century listed buildings.

The glass, steel and painted render courthouse is due to open next autumn on the site of the former Ordnance Survey building. Its 12 court rooms will bring under one roof court offices now in three separate buildings. The radical design was given the green light by Hampshire county council, despite objections from Southampton city council and the City of Southampton Society, whose chairman, Jack Candy, condemned the building as "an absolute disgrace".

Nicholas France, a canon whose 19th century presbytery overlooks the new courthouse, said the style was out of character with the conservation area in Rockstone Place on the edge of Southampton's commercial sector. "It's a hideous construction: a great, ugly pipe in the middle of early Victorian and late Georgian buildings," he said yesterday. "It's a space rocket, Cape Canaveral and Saddam Hussein's secret bunker all rolled into one."

Mr Candy likened the building to a Channel tunnel boring machine or a Nissen hut. "It might be suitable in another site, but not this site. We objected to the Lord Chancellor's office, but they said it was a matter for the local council."

Hampshire council architects, who designed the building on a commission from the Lord Chancellor's department, said care had been taken to design it to be sympathetic to the historically important site. High-quality materials used were practical and durable.

## Plot to hire wife's killer through Exchange & Mart

# Husband in hitman case gets 10 years

Duncan Campbell  
Crime Correspondent

A MAN convicted of trying to hire a hitman through Exchange & Mart to kill his wife was yesterday jailed for 10 years. He had also plotted to murder his stepson after collecting the insurance on his wife's death, detectives said later.

Keith Rigby, aged 46, from Collier, West Yorkshire, was described as "dangerous and dedicated" by the detective who led the investigation. Rigby said nothing when he was jailed at Manchester crown court.

Rigby, a cafe owner, married his wife, Susan, after she answered his lonely hearts advertisement. The marriage was not a success and Rigby planned to have her killed for £150,000 insurance money.

He spotted an advertisement in Exchange & Mart for a private detective company in Dusseldorf which offered to trace missing persons and carry out "searches and rescues". He left a message on the answerphone of the firm and then rang them and said: "I want somebody knocked off. Do you do it?"

The private detective, who worked for the Ministry of Defence in Germany while de-



Rigby gave officers this photograph of his wife

ciding whether to go into the security business full time, initially thought it was a joke. When Rigby persisted, he told his employers who contacted the Mob police.

An arrangement was made to meet Rigby at Manchester airport where an undercover detective spoke to him. He made it clear his intention to kill his wife was serious.

In two further meetings with undercover officers from the National Crime Squad at Hollingworth Lake in Rochdale, Rigby told them he wanted the death to look like

an accident, and he would then kill his stepson himself. The Recorder of Manchester, Judge Rhys Davies, told Rigby yesterday he gave the impression of "a very intelligent, a very determined and... a very wicked man."

Susan Rigby, aged 44, told the court at his trial last month that her husband, whom she had divorced, had her dog and cat put down because he did not want them in the house.

The trial heard Rigby provided the undercover officers with passport photos of his wife and routes that she normally took. He wanted her to die in a car crash to avoid suspicion. He agreed to pay £20,000 for the job and gave the officers cash for their expenses in setting it up.

Paul Marshall, defending, said Rigby, who denied soliciting to murder, had been "driven round the bend" by his wife. "He tried in vain to recreate the happiness and content he felt when [his late first wife] was alive. The reverse has happened. His life is now in ruins."

Detective Inspector Darren Shenton, who led the investigation, said yesterday that Rigby was a dangerous and dedicated man. He had no doubt he would have followed his wife's death with an attempt on his stepson's life.

## Huge rise in rail deaths

Train safety inspectors say new figures are a matter of concern

Keith Harper  
Transport Editor

TRAIN deaths almost doubled in the past year, said safety inspectors, as the level crossing fatalities and the Southall rail disaster, the railway inspectorate announced yesterday.

Frank Davies, chairman of the Health and Safety Executive, said the figures were a matter of concern. Deaths caused by train accidents rose from 25 to 46, although the number of accidents decreased to 89 to 106, the lowest since records started in 1959.

The number of people killed at level crossings rose from three to 14, while suicides and

deaths, including children playing on the line, increased from 252 to 265.

The HSE downplayed the figures, saying that the railway remained the safest method of land transport. "We have no evidence from these figures that most matters under the direct control of railway operators are less safe than they were before privatisation," said Mr Davies.

Two-thirds of the delays on the network are caused by technical problems, which means that in many cases repair work is being carried out inadequately. Mr Davies warned that there would be a huge loss of life in a train crash if the present level of

## Huge public pay-off to college's offshore scandal professor

David Hencke  
Westminster Correspondent

A COLLEGE head who lost nearly £1 million promoting offshore courses in Greece and Spain has received a £100,000 retirement package paid by the taxpayer, an official report reveals today.

David Leyland, the former director of Southampton Institute of Higher Education, took early retirement after a scandal over courses offered in Athens and Alicante.

Now it is revealed by the National Audit Office, Parliament's financial watchdog, that nearly £200,000 has been paid in retirement packages to Professor Leyland and two other senior academics who

left after the debacle. The retirement deal for Prof Leyland also included the taxpayer footing a £2,350 solicitor's bill for a revised divorce settlement; £122,794 towards his pension; £22,500 in termination pay; and £12,000 in professional fees. The other two academics shared a £133,000 payout.

The scandal followed votes of no confidence in the director by staff, students and the board of governors when cuts were sought at the 20,000-student college in Southampton to cover courses overseas.

The report reveals that the college opened an offshore college in an Athens red light district, offering franchised Nottingham Trent university degrees. Some £13,000 cash received from Athens for ser-

vices was taken to Britain by couriers in brown envelopes. Losses reached £339,000 before the campus was closed because it could not recruit enough students to study business administration, law and maritime studies.

A similar franchise scheme at Alicante university ran up debts of £301,400, as it could not recruit students from Britain in maritime leisure management. The scheme was exposed by the Southern Evening Echo after the college accepted a student with six GCSEs and wind-surfing experience to take a degree.

The auditors attack the director for putting £700,000 of public money at risk by issuing writs against the Southern Evening Echo and the Observer, which also wrote

about the scheme. They also revealed that the college employed a retired police superintendent to find out who produced a satirical magazine about the scandal. Some £33,000 was spent in legal fees on the abortive actions.

The report condemns the college for deficiencies, weaknesses and contravening financial arrangements in accepting cash in brown envelopes.

The report also condemns management procedures which left too much power in the hands of the college director and chairman of governors, the late Michael Andrews.

Last night Roger Brown, the college's new principal, said: "The institute will consider the report very seriously. [It] has taken or is taking actions to deal with all the issues."

## Mother killed children with insulin

A MOTHER injected her two young children with a lethal dose of insulin before using the syringe on herself, an inquest was told yesterday.

Paula Wilkinson was leading a "schizophrenic existence" at the time of her death in June, a coroner's court in Warrington, Cheshire, heard.

The 33-year-old nurse was found lying beside her son Mark, aged eight, and five-year-old daughter Hannah in the main bedroom of their home in Runcorn, Cheshire.

Police officers forced their way into the three bedroomed, mid-terrace house in Boston on July 1 following reports that the family had not been seen for several days.

Paul Wilkinson, Paula's husband and the children's father, broke down in tears

and left the courtroom as Detective Chief Inspector Peter Duffy described the discovery of the bodies.

Paula, he said, was lying on the right hand side of the double bed, her daughter Hannah was in the middle and Mark was on the left hand side.

Two notes in "shaky and uncontrolled" handwriting found in the bedroom and written by Paula stated that Hannah had died at 8pm on Saturday, June 27, and her brother three hours later.

Burial clothes were laid out neatly on the children's beds and Mrs Wilkinson's funeral wishes were made clear in her final messages.

It was obvious, said Mr Duffy, that she had "taken the lives of Mark and Hannah before committing suicide."

Only one described as a shrine. There were children's toys, Paula's purse and a brown envelope containing 10 letters and greetings cards written in normal writing," he told the hearing.

He said inquiries into the mother's mental state showed "she was having some personal problems and those were her main cause for concern". He said she was leading a "schizophrenic existence", displaying one side of her character to family and a different side to colleagues and close friends.

While her family believed her to be reasonably happy and normal, others recognised she was depressed, subdued and distressed. When last seen, he said, she was described as "being in an appalling and dreadful condition".

The inquest heard that Mrs Wilkinson had talked more than once to friends of suicide and had mentioned killing herself with insulin, but was dismissed as being both "melodramatic and attention-seeking".

Mr Duffy said a syringe and needle and a vial of insulin was found in the master bedroom. He said his officers concluded that "Paula Wilkinson took the lives of her two children... by injection of lethal quantities of insulin."

Following this [inquest] took her life in the same way."

Cheshire coroner John Hibbert recorded the medical cause of death for all three as an insulin overdose. Recording a verdict of unlawful killing on the two children and suicide on their mother, he said: "My sympathies, and I am sure the sympathies of a lot of other people, go to the family," said Mr Hibbert.

## Thirties spa gets into shape with tea dance after £600,000 revival

### Martin Wainwright on a homage to sun and mud

BRITAIN'S first "medical sunwalk", designed to bring the riviera to northern England throughout the year, was reborn yesterday with a tea dance in front of the Queen. Dignified couples from Harrogate gyrated to Rumba One on the electronic organ, as the town's unique mixture of graceful architecture and 1930s quackery was launched on a new lease of life.

"A beautiful and lovely place, and how wonderful to make use of it again," said the Queen, peering out through a light mist at one of the 36 neighbouring sulphur springs — all sited within an acre and making up the greatest known concentration in the world.

The mayor of Harrogate, Ruth Timmins, splendid in pillar-box red and a deeply-bobbed hat, added her blessings to the £600,000 restoration backed by lottery funds.

Built in 1933 to compete with Baden Baden, Marienbad and other reviving continental spas, the Sunwalk, pavilion and terraces were a centrepiece of the "Harrogate treatment" which inflicted mudbaths, sulphurous douches and other treatments on invalids and hypochondriacs alike.

Topped with stained glass, lavishly heated and filled with sub-tropical plants, the building was a handsome spa's bracing air.

A special train from London brought guests to the opening performed by Lord Horder, then physician to the Prince of Wales, the future King Edward VIII. "The influence of a beautiful and peaceful environment upon the promotion of health and happiness has never been so obvious as here. May the sun never cease to shine on this magnificent structure," pronounced Horder.

In fact, to save funds, the complex was closed in the 1970s — making the town's former Tory council highly unpopular. Two years ago, after vandalism and arson damage, the central, domed octagon and colonnades with trellised wisteria (where lounging beds could be hired by those "failing to thrive") won a £440,500 lottery grant.

Other problems cropped up, including the bankruptcy of the first restoration contractor. But council and business funding saw the project through — paving the way for a pattern of regular meetings of the Harrogate Tea Dance Society in the pavilion.



Couples enjoy a celebratory tea dance in the Sun Pavilion, a refurbishment of Harrogate's spa venue. PHOTOGRAPH: DON MEECE

## Drink-driving hunt master is banned after CPS appeal

Geoffrey Gibbs

A HUNT master stopped for drink-driving while taking his injured wife home from a hunt dinner was yesterday banned from driving for three years after embarrased magistrates were ordered to increase an earlier, more lenient sentence.

Prosecutors and anti drink-drive campaigners were horrified when Rodney Ellis, joint master of the Tedworth hunt in Wiltshire, escaped with a fine when he appeared before Kennet magistrates in May this year.

The huntsman was stopped by police as he drove his wife Georgina back to their home near Marlborough. He told officers his wife was in pain after falling from her horse and bruising tendons in her leg while riding with the hunt in the Savernake forest earlier that day. A breath test showed he was almost twice over the limit.

Crown Prosecution Service officials launched an appeal after Ellis was ordered to pay £500 in fines and costs but escaped a ban. The Court of Appeal agreed with their assertion that the original ruling was flawed. Sentencing Ellis, the presiding magistrate,

Lady Belinda Johnston, had said: "You had just cause in driving because this was a sufficient emergency."

Yesterday, as magistrates were forced into an embarrassing U turn, it emerged that Ellis had a previous conviction for drink-driving and was banned for a year in 1991. In a three minute hearing at Kennet magistrates court near Devizes, Lady Johnston, wife of the Lord Lieutenant of Wiltshire, General Sir Maurice Johnston, told Ellis he was disqualified from driving.

She told him: "Our hands are tied. We can do nothing else. We are banning you for three years and your licence will be endorsed."

Maria Cape, of the Campaign Against Drink Driving, welcomed the decision. "This is a victory for common sense," she said.

At the earlier hearing Andrew Jenkins, defending, said that after being discharged from hospital Mrs Ellis had gone to the dinner expecting a lift home from friends. Realising she was in a great deal of pain Ellis, who admitted drink driving, asked the friend if they could have a lift. The friend did not want to leave and Mr Ellis thought he had no choice but to drive.



As hysteria mounts in Washington it's clear one side has badly misjudged the crisis, but which one?

# Impeachment sneaks up on Clinton

Martin Kettle in Washington

**B**ILL CLINTON and the United States political establishment are peering into the abyss today, suddenly realising that Washington is on the verge of its greatest constitutional crisis.

Or perhaps not. Five weeks ago, after the midterm elections, the prospect of President Clinton's impeachment seemed to recede almost as rapidly as it has now advanced. In those elections, in which the president's Republican accusers were rocked by surprise Democrat gains, the voters seemed to say no to impeachment. The subsequent resignation of Mr Clinton's bouncer-in-chief, Newt Gingrich, and his replacement as House of Representatives Speaker by the apparently pragmatic Bob Livingston, only added to the sense that the investigation was running into the sand.

But it seems that the White House might have relaxed too much. The election results and opinion poll findings might have been taken to mean that the Republican Clinton-baiters would give up. But if that was the case, it could turn out to be a very costly mistake because, driven by the Republican whip Tom DeLay, the momentum towards impeachment has increased recently to the point where no one can say whether Mr Clinton will be in office in six months.

If the administration has made a single key mistake it might be Mr Clinton's failure to reiterate his personal contribution. For whatever reason, Mr Clinton was complacent in midterm victory. One of the few things that can be said with certainty is that, within the next 24 hours, the House of Representatives judiciary committee will adopt as many as four articles of impeachment against the president.

## Police hold man who offered Jones \$1m

**T**HE car park tycoon who shouldered his way on to the national stage by offering \$1 million (£600,000) to Paula Jones to settle her sexual harassment case against President Clinton was arrested yesterday on charges relating to a plot to kill a former business partner, writes Michael Ellison in New York.

It is alleged that Abe Hirschfeld attempted to

arrange the contract killing two years ago of Stanley Stahl, a real estate magnate, after a property deal went sour.

Mr Hirschfeld, aged 79, has used his millions in failed attempts to win offices ranging from United States senator to lieutenant-governor of New York.

He was once the subject of a New York Post headline which asked: "Who Is This Nut?" This might have

been less surprising had he not owned the paper at the time.

Asked then if he was crazy, the tycoon replied: "I am. Any person that achieves things and accomplishes things is a little crazy."

His offer in the Jones case was withdrawn because, he said, he felt he had been shunned and used.

President Clinton agreed a month ago to find

\$850,000 from insurance policies and his legal defence fund in an attempt to close the matter.

It is claimed that Mr Hirschfeld backed out of the alleged plot against 73-year-old Mr Stahl, and the pair arrived at an out-of-court deal in February.

He denied the plot charges. "I never had an interest in killing anybody," he said before his arrest. "I don't need it. Everybody knows I can't

they would then go to the full House next Thursday, which would debate them in emergency session. If any article was passed by a simple majority — even if the others were defeated — then the Senate would have to try the president as soon as possible (probably next month). If two-thirds of the Senate voted to convict Mr Clinton, he would be dismissed immediately and the vice-president, Al Gore, would succeed him.

So now the focus of US domestic politics is on a group whose existence had been widely forgotten: Republican moderates. At least 11 Republicans must swing against impeachment next week to save Mr Clinton. In reality the number probably needs to be higher, since at least three southern Democrats are possibly going to vote for impeachment.

Six of the Republicans have already stated their opposition to impeachment. A further 34 are deemed undecided

by either the whips or White House. Over the coming days, the arm-twisting will be intense.

Some grassroots rightwing Republican groupings have decided that overt pressure might be counterproductive, but the Christian Coalition is mobilising its members with pro-impeachment petitions and is flooding the lawmakers with letters and e-mail. The White House, in contrast, has invited one undecided Republican, Vic Fazio of New York, to travel with the president to the Middle East on Air Force One this weekend as part of a congressional delegation.

The stakes for Mr Clinton, and the Republicans, over the coming days could hardly be higher. But there is a tendency for supposedly informed opinion in Washington to veer rapidly from complacency to fatalism. The current hysteria may look very silly this time next week.

Then again, it might not.

## Rural poor are overtaken by desperate urban underclass

John Vidal

**F**ORGET images of starving children in a barren drought-baked countryside. The stark new face of global hunger, says the United Nations, is to be seen in rapidly growing African and Asian cities where up to 1,000 million people now face severe malnutrition and food shortages.

A new UN Food and Agriculture Organisation report paints a bleak prospect for the poorest urban dwellers in developing countries. Infrastructure in these burgeoning, chaotic cities is unable to keep pace with the demand for food. People are being forced to spend up to 80 per cent of their income on what they eat, while paid work is scarce or non-existent.

According to World Bank figures, the number of poor people in cities has more than doubled globally in 10 years and should reach a billion by the end of next year. The urban poor now outnumber

the rural poor in many countries, a trend that is expected to grow as the world becomes more urbanised.

Cities are exploding worldwide, says the report. Asian cities are growing by 3 per cent a year and African ones

**Burgeoning cities are unable to keep pace with demand for food**

by approximately 4 per cent. Some cities, such as Dhaka in Bangladesh, are growing by more than 1,300 people a day or almost 500,000 a year.

People are exchanging rural poverty and lack of opportunity for appalling city conditions and dismal living standards, says the report.

The implications for food security, says Rachel Nugent, one of the FAO economists who wrote the report, are

alarming. "The poor are growing in number every day. They often have neither access to nor the money to buy food."

The price of food has risen as cities have grown, and urban food prices have risen more than the cost of living and more than incomes, says the report. One study showed that consumers in cities spend, on average, 30 per cent more on food than rural consumers do, but get fewer calories.

Physical conditions also pose problems for the poorest, who lack transport but have to go long distances to markets, and their food is often contaminated due to crowded conditions.

Food supplies, says the report, do not always reach the consumer. "Up to 30 per cent of all food has been lost by the time it reaches the market, which adds to prices and further marginalises the poorest."

As cities grow, they require bigger and more developed transport and distribution to get food to consumers. But in

many cases there is little public money available for roads, vehicles and market places, and the private sector is less interested in feeding the poorest.

Many cities have been unable to cope with the extra demands of their new inhabitants. A city of 10 million people may need to import at least 6,000 tonnes of food every day; this requires much co-ordination between producers, transporters, markets and retailers. City administrators and the private sector find themselves struggling to cope.

What is needed, says the report, is more investment in infrastructure and more encouragement by the authorities to allow people to grow food in cities. In China, up to 20 per cent of the food needs of cities is met by urban farming. Havana provides almost 5 per cent of Cuba's food.

"The poor are being ignored," says Dr Nugent. "The situation could get worse. It's pretty scary."

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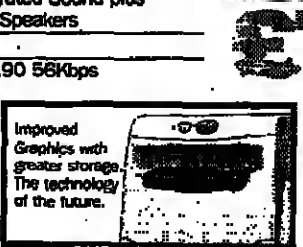
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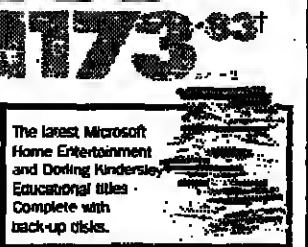
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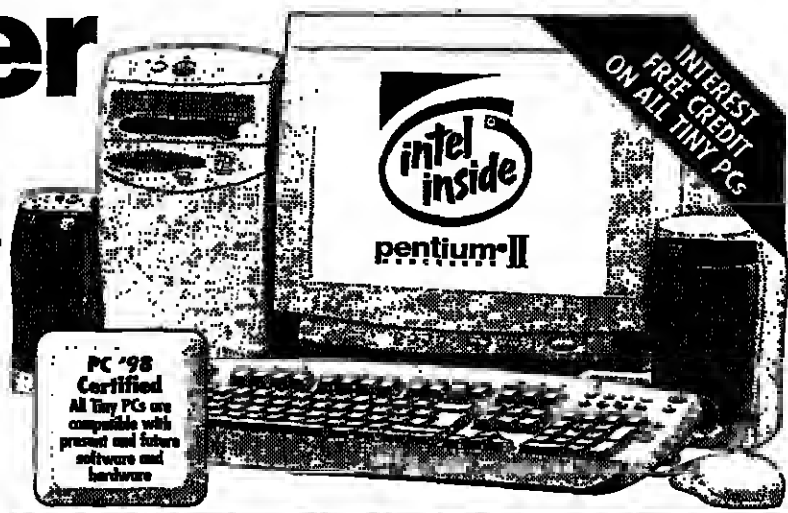
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Brazil's growing bands of street children, seen here clustering near the screens of a television shop, reflect the explosion of poor people in cities: globally they should number a billion a year from now

PHOTOGRAPH: JOHN MAIER

## Arafat fuels health rumours as Israelis dig in on PLO charter

David Sharrock in Gaza

**Y**ASSER Arafat, the Palestinian Authority president, has fuelled speculation about his health by telling an audience of Americans that he might not live to see the completion of the Middle East peace process.

Mr Arafat, whose hands and lower lip tremble constantly, was asked by members of a Washington think tank how the Palestinian Authority might look in 20 years. He replied: "I don't know if I'll live one year or two years."

The exchange between Mr Arafat and members of the Washington Institute of Near East Policy was reported by the Israeli daily Ha'aretz yesterday. The meeting took place

at Mr Arafat's office in the West Bank town of Ramallah. The 68-year-old has always denied rumours of Parkinson's disease. He often looks tired and pale in public but his aides blame long working hours.

Mr Arafat's neurologist, Ashraf Kurd, said last year that his patient suffered from bouts of depression but did not have Parkinson's, a degenerative disease that affects motor function.

Fulfilling his side of the US-brokered Wye River land-for-security agreement — which Israel has suspended, claiming breaches by the Palestinians — Mr Arafat yesterday convened officials and legislators to revoke clauses of the Palestine Liberation Organi-

sation's (PLO) charter calling for Israel's destruction.

On Monday President Clinton will address the Palestinian National Council (PNC) in Gaza City. Under the Wye agreement, the PNC is to reaffirm a letter sent by Mr Arafat to Mr Clinton which revokes clauses of the PLO founding charter calling for Israel's destruction. Israel insists a vote be taken by a show of hands, while the Palestinians say only approval by acclamation is required.

Mr Netanyahu, meanwhile, said he had ordered the army to use a firm band against Palestinian rioters, and remained adamant that a troop withdrawal from areas of the West Bank next week would not go ahead on the schedule

agreed at Wye. The issue of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails has ignited violence on the West Bank in which two Palestinian teenagers have died.

Thousands walked in pouring rain with the coffin of Jihad Iyad yesterday, the first day of winter. Several dozen Palestinians broke away from the procession and threw stones at Israeli soldiers who replied with tear gas, but the confrontation was brief.

Meanwhile, protests by rightwing Israelis against Mr Clinton's visit intensified, with signs reading "Clinton Go Home" strung along the Tel Aviv-Jerusalem motorway and posters proclaiming "Clinton is a Palestinian" plastered around Jerusalem.



سكرا من الامين

The Guardian Friday December 11 1998

INTERNATIONAL NEWS | 9

## Tribunal jails Croat for rape 'war crime'

Stephen Bates  
European Affairs Editor

**A**N ACT of rape was classified for the first time as a war crime by the United Nations tribunal in the Hague yesterday — the 50th anniversary of the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights — as the court sentenced a Bosnian Croat former paramilitary commander to 10 years' imprisonment.

Anto Furundzija, now aged 29 and once leader of a gang called the Jokers, was sentenced after being found guilty on two counts, as a perpetrator of torture in violation of the laws or customs of war, and of aiding and abetting outrages upon personal dignity.

He was found to have stood by and watched while another paramilitary beat and raped a female detainee during an interrogation in 1993. His sentence was double the term demanded by the prosecutors.

Furundzija led the Jokers during the Bosnian war, operating from headquarters in a bungalow in Nadolci, near Vitez. He was arrested by Nato troops acting on a sealed indictment in December last year, and his detention since then will be counted towards his sentence.

The case against him centred on the testimony of a victim, identified in court as Witness A, whom his defence lawyers accused of having a

biased memory because of her ordeal.

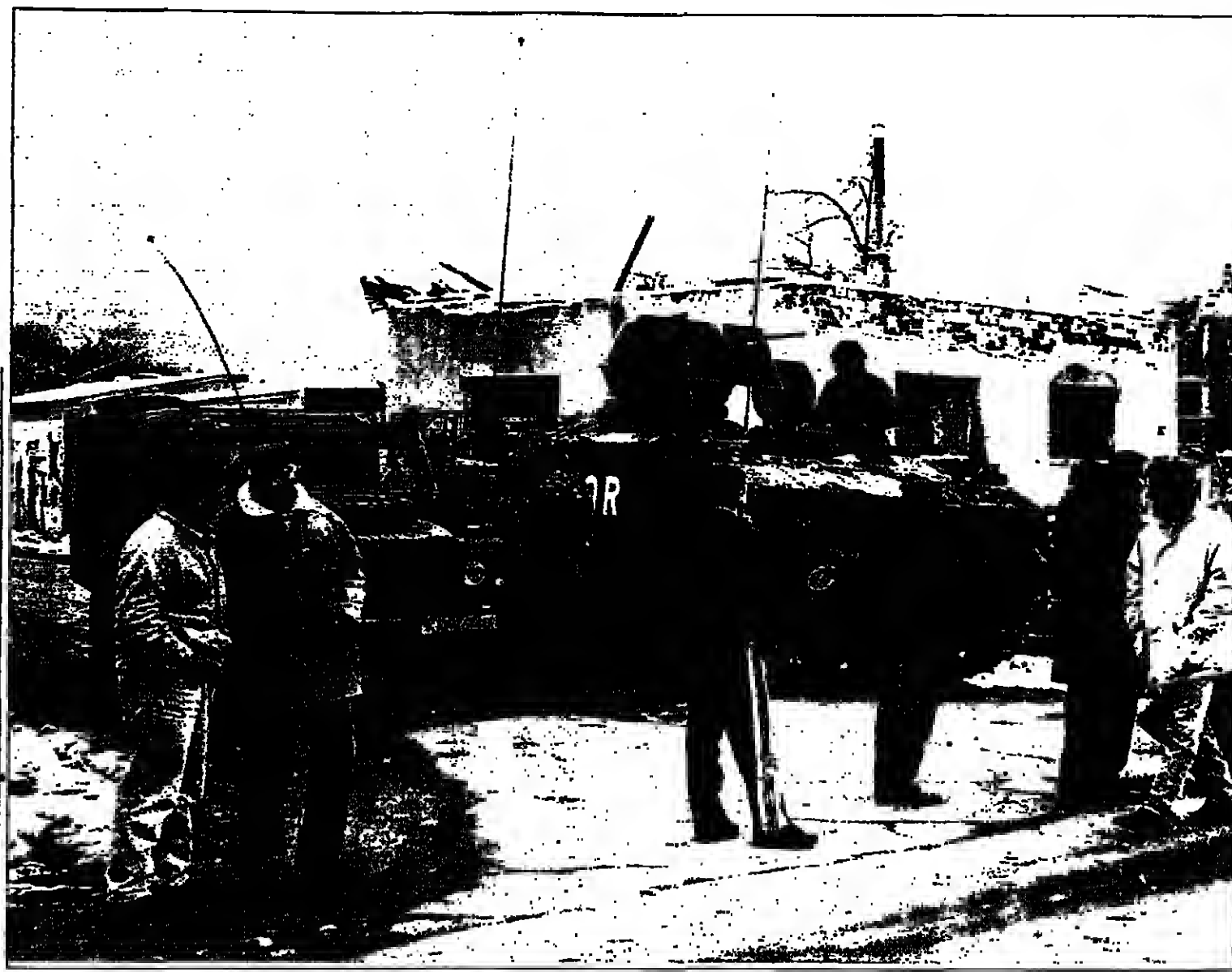
It was stated in court that the Jokers, a special unit of paramilitary "police", had arrested A and that she was interrogated in Furundzija's presence. As A was questioned, the other soldier present had threatened to insert a knife into her vagina if she did not tell the truth.

It was said that while Furundzija interrogated A and another prisoner, known as Victim B, they were beaten on the soles of their feet with a baton. Furundzija did not intervene when A was forced to have oral and vaginal sex with the soldier.

In its statement, the court said expert evidence showed that even when suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, a witness may still be accounted reliable. It added that it accepted Witness A's testimony. The court defined torture as an act of coercion taking place in the presence of a public official acting as an organ of the state or any other authority-wielding entity.

It added: "An accused... is responsible as a co-perpetrator of torture if he... participates in an integral part and partakes of the prohibited purpose behind the torture, to obtain information or a confession, to punish or intimidate, to humiliate, coerce or discriminate against the victim."

Although yesterday's judgment is the third to be handed



Anto Furundzija (above), the Bosnian Croat sentenced in The Hague yesterday; and (left) Ahmici in Bosnia, where Nato troops caught him last year

down by the tribunal arising out of the Bosnian war, it was the first to focus exclusively on an act of rape. Other defendants have been charged with rapes, but as part of other war crimes.

In a 15-minute judgment the presiding judge, Florence

Mumba, said: "The chamber finds it indisputable that rape and other serious sexual assaults in situations of armed conflict entail criminal liability of the perpetrators."

Furundzija will serve 10 years for torture and eight years consecutively for rape.

His lawyer, Luka Misetic, claimed he was "truly shocked" by the verdict and would appeal. "Every piece of evidence contradicted the testimony of the main witness," he said.

Mr Misetic claimed that other defendants had got off

more lightly adding: "Drazen Erdemovic admitted killing 73 people and got five years. Clearly there are questions of proportionality."

Erdemovic, also a Bosnian Croat, was found guilty last March and is serving his sentence in Norway. It is likely

that Furundzija will be imprisoned there or in Italy or Finland. In a statement the prosecution said: "It is fitting that the judgment was delivered on the 50th anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights. It is an important decision be-

cause it demonstrates that acts of rape will be dealt with seriously. International humanitarian law is fully equipped to assert that persons have the right to respect for their physical integrity, even in times of armed conflict."

## Terrifying power that can turn civilians into spoils of war

Commentary  
Sue Lees

**Y**esterday the United Nations War Tribunal found a man guilty of the war crime of rape for the first time.

It is symbolic that, on the 50th anniversary of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, rape should be elevated to the status of a war crime, alongside other forms of violence waged against civilian populations.

We tend to think of rape as an individual act but its historical origins rest with the gang. The Latin word from which rape derives means "to seize or carry off".

In ancient times, warring tribes abducted women who then became the spoils of the war, which is perhaps why we speak of a woman's reputation being spoiled by rape.

In Susan Brownmiller's seminal 1977 book *Against Our Will*, she documented how rape had been used as a weapon to destroy the enemy's morale in all

known wars. It occurred most frequently when victorious armies marched through conquered lands.

She noted the connection between rape and killing reflected in the slogan "double veterans" — soldiers who raped and killed women in the Vietnam war. Brownmiller's study indicated that gang rape is a normal aspect of war and men who rape in war are not psychopaths but "ordinary

?@!a pullquote in Roman with rules above and below, four lines deep

men

She argued that victory in arms brings group power undreamed of in civilian life. It is for this reason that depicting rape as a war crime is so vital.

The silence regarding rape in war was broken in the 1990s by the presence of an active women's move-

ment which publicised the mass rapes of Muslim and Serbian women during the war in Bosnia. An international movement developed to have rape declared a war crime by the Geneva Convention. Reports of forcible impregnation of thousands of women, mostly Muslims by Serbian soldiers as a form of ethnic cleansing, caused outrage in the West.

A European Commission report estimated that 20,000 women had been victims of "organised" rape in Bosnia, while Muslim and Croat sources claimed the numbers were far greater.

The United Nations Commission investigated the rapes in 1993. At the larger women's clinic of Zagreb, they found 119 cases of pregnancy resulting from rape.

Rape camps and forced brothels were discovered where women and girls were raped day after day, many in front of their children.

Hundreds of women were held like animals, threatened with death if they resisted. The United Nations tribunal has made a landmark decision.

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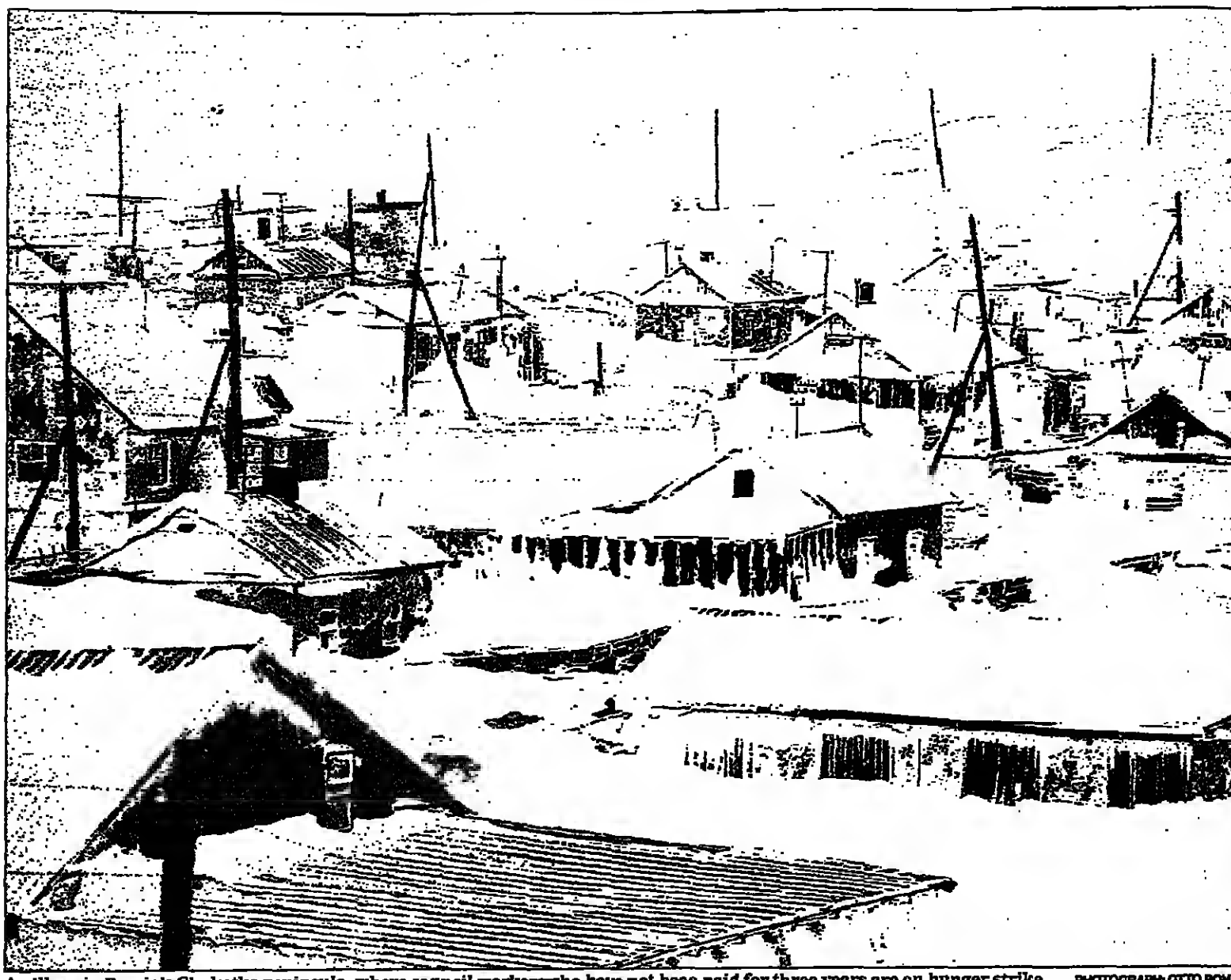
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A village in Russia's Chukotka peninsula, where council workers who have not been paid for three years are on hunger strike. PHOTOGRAPH BY OTTO POHL.

## Hunger turns to revolt in Russia's frozen desert

With a crisis budget in Moscow, James Meek in Pevek finds starvation in the Arctic far north

IN LATE November, in the long evening of the 40-day polar night now shrouding their condemned village, Igor Mikhailovsky, Slava Rybin and nine other council workers lay down to starve.

Turning hunger into protest was a formality. They had worked without pay for more than three years, and when their bosses began trimming the trickle of food keeping them and their families alive, they lost the last reason to keep clocking on.

"We're not really on hunger strike," said Mr Mikhailovsky. "We've been hungry for a long time. The only difference is we're not working any more."

Like tens of thousands of others, they came voluntarily to the Arctic wasteland of the Chukotka peninsula, just west of Alaska, and in theory they are free to leave. But less and less distinguishes them from the Stalin-era convicts who founded their bleak settlements.

Like the slave labourers of the 1930s, they increasingly work for food not money. Like the political prisoners whose

lives were casually expended in the utopian cause of making the Arctic bloom, they are trapped in a frozen, unforgiving land, cut off by poverty, red tape and indifference.

The enormity of Russia's Arctic problem puts a harsh perspective on the government's crisis budget, approved by the cabinet and presented to parliament in Moscow yesterday. It is relatively tough, to please the International Monetary Fund in the hope that suspended loans will be resumed. But the minister of finance, Mikhail Zadornov, acknowledged that it includes \$7.5 billion in foreign loans the government cannot even count on. Many people doubt whether the prime minister, Yevgeny Primakov, let alone the Duma, will agree to keep the money supply tight when human lives on the periphery are wearing so thin.

The hunger-striking council workers maintain an essential services, such as the central heating system, in the settlement of Apapellino, a cluster of houses and blocks of flats around the airport serving the Arctic port of Pevek.

The advent of market forces and the cost of sustaining the community means Apapellino has to close, but the authorities have no money either to relocate the inhabitants or to pay them. The people cannot leave because their homes are worth nothing and they cannot afford new ones in other parts of Russia. Their only leverage is the threat to turn off Apapellino's central heating — but that would condemn their own families to freeze in temperatures of -35C.

For two years the council has staved off confrontation by offering the workers an emporium, a monthly food ration arranged through the local shop against future wages: 2lb of rice, 2lb of peas, 2lb of sugar, 4lb of flour, 4lb of meat, and 1lb of salted fish, plus bread. Some households of three or four have been subsisting on this alone, without the means to buy clothes, soap or toothpaste. After the financial crisis hit Russia in August, even this allowance slipped.

"They were carrying out an experiment," said Mr Rybin, a furnace operator. "Every month they reduced the rations. They lowered them to the point where we couldn't live any more on peas and rice."

The hunger strikers — eight men and three women — are growing weaker. One man has been taken to hospital with a condition made worse by malnutrition. The men and women lie in two separate, stuffy rooms in a barrack-like block near the airport.

"The food they give us isn't enough," sobbed one of the women, Valentina Vaidikha. "We don't have any butter or tea. My son has a baby boy, aged one, and he's hungry. My son's hungry, too, and his wife's pregnant."

Pevek was founded in 1987, when Stalin's power of life and death turned the ravages of the polar explorers. Otto Schmidt into reality. Schmidt told a British Stalinist syndicalist of plans to grow wheat in the Arctic. "People believe that the Arctic is wasteland, incapable of development, useless to mankind, a frozen desert," he said. "They are utterly wrong. The cold is no obstacle against human habitation."

Once the Gulating generation had built the Arctic communities, they were peopled by migrants attracted by high wages and enormous state expenditure. Instead of mining Chukotka's rich seams of gold with rotting shift workers, entire families were shipped in, and everything from kindergartens to greenhouses built to cater for them.

The collapse of the Soviet Union, partly caused by the burden of supporting the far



north, has left the northerners stranded.

Pevek has an esplanade and a hotel. But the sea is a frozen sheet, crossed by occasional foraging polar bears. Last month a truck-powered loader barely managed to batter a channel through to the docks for a consignment of diesel oil to keep the town from freezing.

There are no roads or railways out of Pevek. Once home to 12,000 people, now with only 5,000, it has no cinemas or theatres. Going out means donning a space-suit-like assembly of hats, coats and layered clothing. In minutes exposed flesh can turn white with the first burn of frostbite.

Those who were able have already packed up and gone, leaving ever poorer Russians, many of them pensioners, disabled and single-parent families, cringing on to waiting lists for the few free flats in central Russia the state provides each year.

Larissa Kozar, head of Pevek's social security office, said: "We all came to work temporarily. I've lived here temporarily for 21 years."

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## Nicaragua sues tobacco giants

Mark Tran in New York

**TOBACCO** companies are facing a legal onslaught from foreign countries seeking compensation for the costs of treating smoking-related illnesses, following their \$206 billion (\$124 billion) settlement with US states.

Nicaragua yesterday filed suit in Puerto Rico against 11 US cigarette makers including Philip Morris, British American Tobacco/B&T Industries and Brown & Williamson. In May, Guatemala lodged a similar claim and Brazil is also expected to follow suit with a claim for around \$33 billion.

Julio Centeno Gomez, attorney general of Nicaragua, where a quarter of the four million population are smokers, said: "Nicotine consumption

is like a permanent Hurricane Mitch plague on our country. We want to prevent tobacco companies from profiting at our expense."

Nicaragua and Guatemala have engaged Texas law firm, Fleming, Hovenkamp & Grayson. Their first hurdle is to persuade the US courts that they have jurisdiction in foreign cases.

"There has yet to be such a case," said Mark Gottlieb, a lawyer specialising in tobacco legislation. "But there is no reason under US law why a foreign nation cannot come into a US court if the defendant is American."

"Since the states' case took off like wildfire, countries are looking at the possibility of making claims as they are in a remarkably similar position."

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# Comment

## Diary

Matthew Norman

SINCE the inception of the Pinochet saga, it has been impossible to discern the Prime Minister's personal feelings, since he has hidden behind the cloak of sub judice. We are intrigued, then, to hear of events in Westminster on Wednesday afternoon. Most Labour MPs got the news of Jack Straw's decision via their pagers, in a message from chief whip Ann Taylor which added the instruction to ministers on no account to comment (sub judice once again). This sparked raucous celebrations in one half of the Commons tea room, the other half seething quietly. However, one Labour MP forsook his cup of cheer in favour of skulking about outside Mr Tony's room at the very moment the news came through just after 4 pm. "There was," he tells us, "loud and sustained cheering from within." He cannot swear that Mr Tony was in at the time, but he usually is at that time of the week since Prime Minister's Questions has just finished, and we prefer to believe that he was there to lead not only the cheering but also a vigorous Conga.

CELEBRATIONS clearly continued long after tea time on Wednesday. At dinner, the member's dining room ran clean out of Chilean red.

WHILE he visits all the 22 local authorities of Wales, Alan Michael insists that this tour (paid for out of party funds) is under the auspices of a Labour devolution campaign, and has nothing whatever to do with his campaign to become Welsh leader. Things are going splendidly. Last Friday, for example, the turnout for a Q&A session in Newport was 25. Tonight the Welsh Secretary visits Torfaen... and the fact that he is dragging Mo Mowlam along with him is, once again, absolutely nothing to do with boosting his personal popularity in the quest for the leadership. I hope that's crystal clear.

I AM amazed by the versatility of Simon Kelner. By day the editor of the Independent, at night Simon is branching out into showbusiness. He is now the leader of the Chipalatas, a troupe of Jewish strippers whose performance at the Full Monty routine at a charity show in Watford featured in Wednesday's

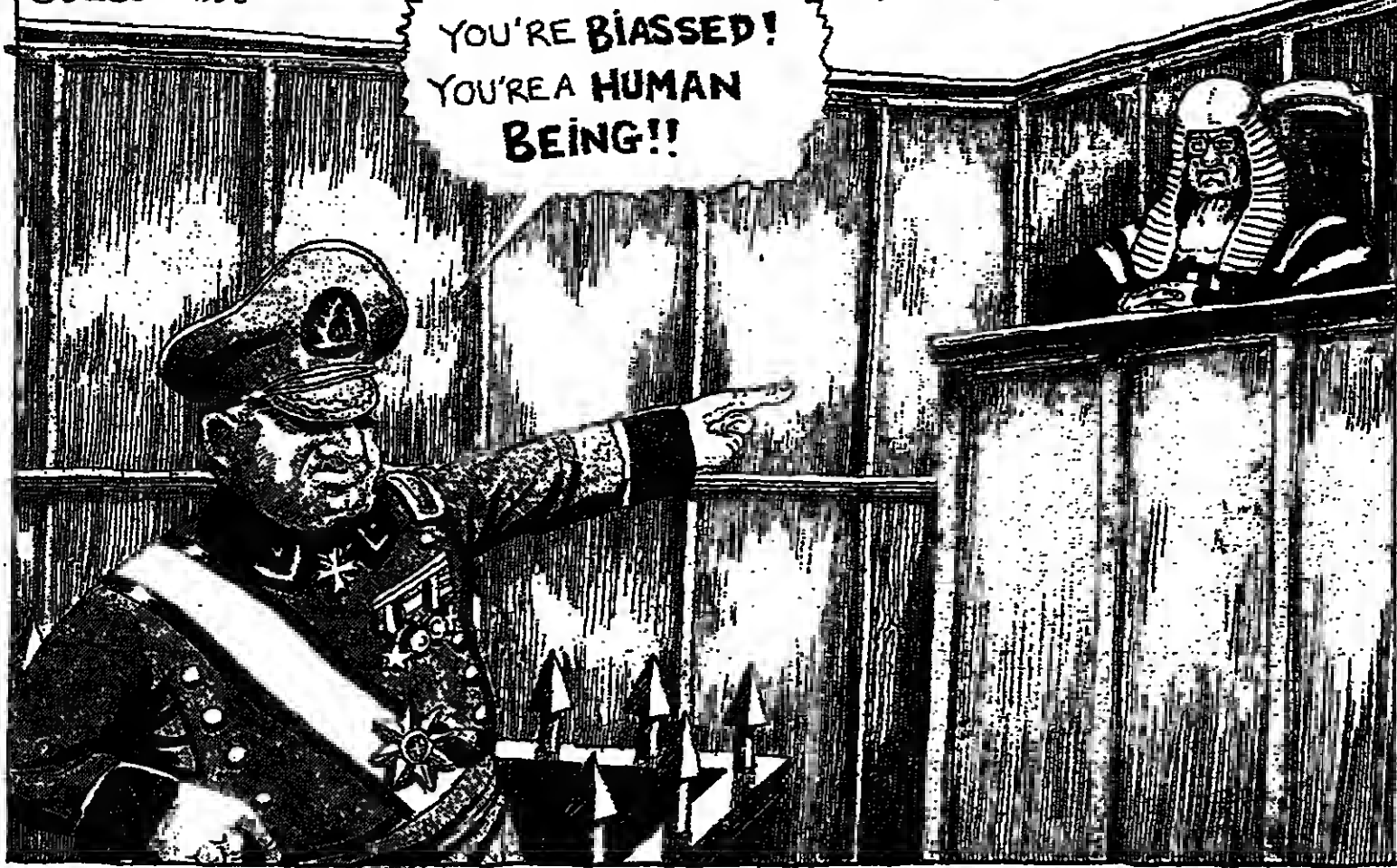


London Evening Standard. Simon is the one at the front.

DISTRESSING to relate, the seasonal spirit has so far failed to infect Paul Johnson. When my colleague Simon Bowers rang him yesterday to ask for a Christmas message, he found my sane and rational friend in brusque and insolent mood. Far be it from me to lecture so devout and voluble a Christian about the meaning of Our Lord's life on earth. However, he might care to reflect upon Jesus's strictures about turning the other cheek. Or more aptly, perhaps, in the case of this exceedingly naughty boy, having the other cheek turned.

FROM New York comes news that UNSCOM is imaginatively widening its efforts to track down Saddam Hussein's concealed weapons of mass destruction. The UN Security Commission has been receiving correspondence, we learn, from an unnamed medium on the South Coast of Bahrain who is keen to help them. "I am getting images," she reports, "of long, shiny objects in the caves of Southern Iraq." The crisis, it seems, may be drawing to an unexpected close.

© Steve Bell 1998



## Shame on the Birmingham Six for bringing this gold-digging lawsuit

Alan Rusbridger



SHORTLY before the last election a now-forgotten millionaire Conservative backbencher by the name of David Evans visited a school in his constituency. During the course of an interview with some sixth formers he unburdened himself of a few strikingly unpleasant observations.

He advocated hanging or castration for "black bastards" who were guilty of rape. He referred to his Labour opponent in Weylyn and Hatfield as a "single girl [with] three bastard children". And, challenged by the pupils about his views on capital punishment, he disputed that the Bridgewater Three and Birmingham Six were truly innocent.

Of the Birmingham Six's innocence he said: "If you believe that you'll believe anything... You think the Birmingham Six had killed hundreds of people before they were caught." Unknown to Mr Evans, one of his audience tape-recorded these remarks and sent them off to Anglia Television. They were picked up by several newspapers.

I don't suppose any editor gave the matter a second thought. Here was a man who expected shortly to be re-elected by his constituents. It seemed a basic right of the voters to know their present and putative MP was an unpleasant creep. At the Guardian we put the story on the front page under the headline "Into the gutter". There was a further sub-heading which read: "Fury at Tory MP's crude remarks to children on race, women and justice." I doubt that a single Guardian reader sympathised with anything Evans said, believed anything he said or imagined that the paper endorsed any of his views.

Within two months David Evans was an ex-MP. The voters of Weylyn decided they preferred Melanie Johnson, mother of the three "bastard children". It was a just result, and the media had done its little bit to ensure that the electorate had been able to make an informed decision. Time to move on.

But not quite. A little while afterwards the Guardian received letters from two firms of Dublin lawyers. The first announced that they represented the Birmingham Six and that this was "the gravest case of libel this firm has ever had to deal with". What did we propose to do? We wrote back and proposed that we print an immediate statement making it clear that the men were, of course, innocent of the crimes of which David Evans had accused them and, of course, the Guardian did not endorse his repulsive views. Not good enough, said the lawyers. Their clients wanted "a measure of monetary compensation". We gently probed to see what sort of compensation they had in mind. It became clear that, by the time we had paid them and their lawyers, we would be parting with a sum well into six figures. A big price tag for keeping the voters of Weylyn informed.

But there was something else that rankled. The lawyers' letters spoke ringingly of the "hatred and contempt" shown

to their clients by the British press. Right through their ordeal most of Fleet Street had been unrelentingly hostile to the cause of the Birmingham Six. The lawyers would accordingly rely on "express malice". You couldn't quarrel with much of that. Except that there was one British newspaper which — throughout the long, dark days in which the Six languished forgotten in prison — did keep something of a flame alive. That paper was the Guardian.

There is a further irony: we could have done more, sooner, to prove the innocence of the Birmingham Six, but we were held back — by the libel laws. Any suggestion that the police had rigged the evidence against them would have been met with a shower of writs. So there is a real sense in which the libel laws were responsible for the Six spending many unnecessary years behind bars.

Despite these obstacles, Guardian reporters persisted. Peter Chippindale was the first to take an interest in the men's case at a time when most didn't want to know. He attended every day of the trial in Lancaster and was approached by the families for support.

CHRIS Mullin, who played a crucial role in eventually proving the men's innocence, wrote in his book *Error of Judgement*: "Only two journalists took the view that there was anything more to this trial than met the eye — David Brazil of the Irish Press and Peter Chippindale of the Guardian. They were the only journalists to make contact with the prisoners' wives and their reporting benefited from a note of scepticism... which was wholly absent from most other accounts of the trial."

After the trial Chippindale continued to dig into the case. He broke, and followed through, the story of how the men were beaten in Weylyn Green prison. This was not a popular campaign for a British newspaper to run. Hugh Callaghan's autobiography acknowledges: "It wasn't always easy for journalists." Reporters who wrote sympathetic pieces about the Six "took some stick... [they] had a lot of courage to keep going."



The Guardian backed Chippindale in publicising the statement by the Bolcombe Street Four that they had, in fact, been responsible for the Birmingham bombings. When 14 prison warders were acquitted for assault in 1996 the paper ran a powerful editorial asking "who best up the bombers?" A part of it is quoted in Paddy Joe Hill's autobiography.

When Chippindale left the Guardian in 1979 he handed over his entire dossier to Chris Mullin. Mullin's work was to prove decisive in proving the men's innocence. But the work of other Guardian reporters and writers should not be forgotten — including David Leigh, Paul Foot (then on the Mirror), John Mullin, David Pallister and Duncan Campbell.

When the men were finally released they invited Chippindale to the "official" celebration. Both he and the paper were effusively thanked. He was repeatedly told that without it the campaign would never have succeeded. Hugh Callaghan was kind enough to single out the Guardian's role in his autobiography: "Most of the papers were awful, hardly readable. Peter Chippindale in the Guardian was an exception: he gave accurate reports and was sceptical."

The Six have evidently not entirely forgotten this paper's work on their behalf. Their lawyers have the grace to admit that the Guardian has a "generally good reputation in relation to this and other miscarriages of justice cases". One of the Six even offered to drop the case at one stage if we covered his costs. But the others still apparently want their "measure of monetary compensation".

The action is more cynical still: the men are suing in the Dublin Courts rather than risk an action in London, despite the fact that the Guardian sells only 3,000 copies a day in the Irish Republic — less than 1 per cent of our daily circulation. The lawyers call it "forum shopping". The lawyers will have told them that Irish juries are (or were, until the recent Slab Murphy case) famous for inflicting punishment on British newspapers.

The simplest thing, I suppose, would be to pay up. A trial could be drawn out and

highly expensive. We could probably hammer out some kind of quiet deal. But how would that serve our readers? The logic would be inevitable: the next time an unpleasant MP started spouting repugnant views we might well be reluctant to risk printing them. You, the voters, would not know them. A little bit of the interchange of democratic life in this country would have died.

AND PAYING out huge sums on libel claims such as this has caused a prisoner wrote to us and told us that he had had a confession beaten out of him in a police cell there would obviously be a strong temptation to tell him to forget it. The Police Federation are notorious for suing. It's not uncommon to be hit by a group action by policemen each demanding hefty damages and costs. The coppers call them "garage actions" on account of the extension you can build on the proceeds. It has been a highly effective way of making it extremely difficult for journalists to write about miscarriages of justice cases involving corrupt policemen. Out of 80-odd cases only one paper has fought and won a case against them: the Guardian.

And now the Birmingham Six are playing the same game. Of course, it is impossible not to feel sympathy for them. They were beaten up, fitted up and forgotten. Who could blame them for feeling real rage when some ranting backbench MP questions their hard-won innocence? Of course they should sue David Evans. Indeed, they have done so, and it has cost him dearly. Good. It will be the last time he ignorantly shoots his mouth off on the subject. But the Six, of all people, should know better than to use the libel laws to suppress legitimate journalism about people in public life.

This article breaks the conventions of libel. Editors are not supposed to let their readers into the backroom exchanges in defamation proceedings. The lawyers would much prefer a discreet deal or a court case played on home territory. The readers would be none the wiser as to why their newspaper might no longer take notice of the robust stance it used to on rotten politicians or wrongly-convicted prisoners.

This piece will be missing from the edition of the Guardian that goes to Ireland. But British readers deserve to know what the game is. If the Six are determined to fight — and if they win — it will be a sad day for journalists who consider it part of their job to campaign for victims of miscarriages of justice.

In jails all over Britain there are prisoners like the Birmingham Six hoping against hope that a reporter like Peter Chippindale might notice them and take up their case. Each gold-digging libel action like this makes it a little less likely that in future any paper will be willing to take the risk.

Alan Rusbridger is the editor of the Guardian

The frightened murderers in Chile are now making threats

## Creatures in the murk

Isabel Hilton



IF THE chorus of Pinochet supporters, led in this country by the immortal duo of Norman Lamont and Margaret Thatcher, is to be believed, the sky is about to fall. If you are of a nervous disposition, I hope you are safely indoors. The premise on which this prediction of disaster is based is two-fold: firstly that commerce with Chile will wither and die and, more importantly, that democracy in Chile will crumble under the strain imposed by further legal proceedings against the general.

But the truth is that the evidence is sparse. Business in Chile, with the exception of the art buyers who might be expected to take an ideological line, is as pragmatic as business anywhere. I find it unlikely that it plans to cut off its nose to save Pinochet's face. Which brings us to democracy.

How curious that it should be General Pinochet's admirers who shout most loudly about the threat to Chile's democracy. Chilean democracy used to be rather well thought of — unlike its neighbours. Chile enjoyed 40 years of uninterrupted democratic government until 1973. A record of which many Chileans were justifiably proud and which made the events of the Seventies and Eighties a matter not only of pain but of shame.

Now, we are told, General Pinochet should be thanked for "restoring" democracy to Chile. Since he overthrew it in the first place, you might think it was the least he could have done, but that is not entirely the point either. The point that many Chileans argue, is that the democracy that the general gave to his grateful nation was a travesty of what had gone before.

As every Guardian reader must know by now, General Pinochet rewrote the constitution and gave himself and his minions an amnesty for the crimes of the dictatorship, stitching Chile forever, he thought, into the authoritarian straitjacket he had designed. When his bad bargain was offered to the politicians and the nation, they recognised that it was a better deal than continuing de facto rule: they took it and have lived with it, with as much dignity as they could muster, ever since. But they knew, of course, that this settlement left many bills unpaid.

That it should be a Spanish judge who finally presented those bills was something that few would have guessed, even a few months ago, when a Chilean delegation went to Rome to support the treaty that may, one day, establish an international court of justice. If the court makes it into being, it will enshrine the principles of international justice for certain crimes, just as the steady accretion of conventions and treaties that have followed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights have done. The Chilean government supported that principle, choosing to sign the treaty on the highly symbolic date of September 11, the anniversary of the 1973 coup. But for the time being, there is that awkward matter of how the bill for the past should be paid.

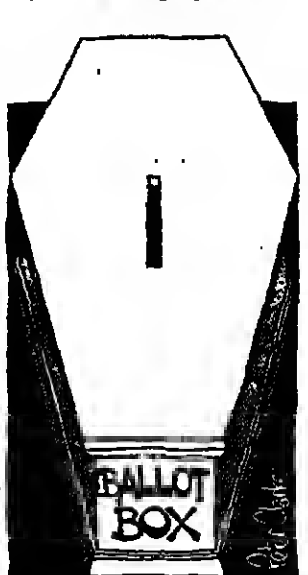
LORD Lamont would have us believe that there is no account to settle. The Chilean government has tried to persuade us, helplessly, that it is ready to pay both encourage us to imagine that they speak for all Chileans. But they do not, for instance, speak for Carmen Hertz.

Carmen Hertz was a senior member of the team who represented Chile in the Rome negotiations. Until Pinochet's arrest, she was the chief legal adviser to the Chilean foreign ministry. When her government came out in defence of Pinochet, Carmen Hertz resigned: her husband, Carlos

Berguer, was one of Pinochet's victims. Berguer was a journalist. He was arrested in September 1973 and sentenced by a military tribunal to a term of 30 days imprisonment. Carmen represented her husband at his "trial" and is in a position to know, therefore, that there was no evidence against him. It was while he was serving his sentence that he was taken from the prison, tortured and murdered, only hours after she had visited him.

Carmen Hertz spent many years supporting, through legal work, the relatives of the disappeared and, when the dictatorship ended, she took up her post at the foreign ministry. Clearly she has every reason to support a return to democracy in Chile, so perhaps her assessment of what that democracy consists of is worth a little more attention than the views of Norman Lamont.

It was, in her view, perhaps the only possible bargain at the time, but that does not make it a good one. The right kept a stranglehold on constitutional change, something Chile's more democratically minded politicians could do little about. But, she argues, they went on to create an air of social and political tolerance of the crimes of the dictatorship that fatally wounded any hope of real reconciliation in Chile. The military high command who were involved in those crimes enjoyed not only impunity, but the usual privileges and immunities of their office. Not only were they not in jail, they were not even out of a job or off the invitation list: they were free to continue to impose their own version of events on the nation's memory. At best, for people like



The democracy he gave his nation was a travesty of what had gone before

Carmen Hertz, it was a step towards democracy but it had a morally rotten core. This, then, the settlement that Lord Lamont would have us believe is gravely imperilled by General Pinochet's confinement on the Wentworth estate. In deference to his opinion, let us examine it seriously. If the opinion of Chilean society is taken into account, it is clear that General Pinochet is popular only with the extreme fringe. The overwhelming majority think he should answer for his deeds and none but the lonely fanatics would wish to sacrifice even Chile's compromised democracy in his defence.

This is not to say that Chile's politicians are not worried. But what are they worried about? They are worried that the extreme right will resort, as they have already begun to do, to death threats, even to selective assassination of people like Carmen Hertz, in order to intimidate the nation into continuing to support the Pinochet view of history. They know that beneath the surface of democracy there are creatures in the murk who regret nothing and are still prepared to try to unlearnmail any government that attempted to complete Chile's return to a democracy based on justice and the absence of fear.

They were always there. The difference is that now, they are frightened.

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# Analysis The genetic code



Isabel Hilton  
on Pinochet  
12

British and American scientists make history today. **Tim Radford** reports how by taking a tiny worm to bits they have taken a giant step towards understanding the very stuff of human life

## A new map of a (quite) close cousin

**T**HEY brought a worm to bits. They completed and published the blueprint for an entire complex, multicellular organism. It may be small and it may be a worm but its basic functions are our basic functions. Biology today hunches forward: the complete mapping of human genetic make-up gets ever closer.

It took 15 years in all, and involved identifying more than 97 million bits of DNA that add up to a recipe for more than 18,000 genes. These 18,000 genes are what it takes to make a worm turn. In fact, the genes make the worm learn, turn, squirm, eat, digest, and make what passes for love in the microscopic world of the nematode *Caenorhabditis elegans*. This worm is no more than 1mm from end to end. It is about as simple as a multicellular creature can get, and it takes about four days to get from egg to worm. It comes in just two sexes: male and self-fertilising hermaphrodite, but it can still manage to produce around 100 offspring before it dies.

It now joins some other important organisms whose DNA code is now complete, and published on the Internet, for the benefit of researchers all over the planet. One of them is yeast, which has been providing cakes and ale for humankind for at least 6,000 years. Another is *Helicobacter pylori*, which has been providing modern humans with stomach ulcers for decades. A third is *Typhimurium*, a better known as venerable syphilis, which has been a global health problem since about the time Columbus came back from America. A fourth is a strange little microbe called *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* which lives in volcanic vents almost two miles under the ocean.

But these are all single-celled organisms: each one a microscopic blob of life's machinery. *C. elegans* is different: it is made of 99 co-oper-

ating blobs of living tissue. The nematode may be too small even to step on, but it is a giant leap for mankind all the same. The research matters for its own sake — four out of every five creatures on the planet is a nematode worm — and as a measure of the sheer effort taken so far. But there is bigger game to be stalked and bagged, within the blueprint for a worm. The worm may be small, but it is the nearest organism to humans so far described. It is a milestone in the race to map the DNA sequences of mice, rats, rice, thalecress, zebrafish, chicken, pig and other useful complex creatures. And it is a kind of shortcut to the greatest prize of all: the entire 3 billion-letter alphabet that will spell out the 80,000 genes or so that describe what it is to be human.

That last should, if all goes well, be finished by 2003: a momentous date, exactly 50 years after James Watson and Francis Crick determined the structure of the double helix that supports the DNA code, the four-letter chemical alphabet that describes all life on the planet. Crick and Watson are still working as scientists. That is a measure of the speed of the achievement: it is already enough to make even the achiever reel: new human genes are being identified, described, examined and even tinkered with almost every week. The sum of a creature's genes is called its genome. More than 40 nations have joined the Human Genome Organisation to complete the project, at a cost — a figure plucked from the air, because nobody knows how to do the accounting — of about \$3 billion.

The worm was turned to good account chiefly by a team from Washington University in St Louis and the Sanger Centre in Cambridge. *C. elegans* exists almost everywhere in the temperate world but the project started in Cam-

bridge more than 30 years ago with some worms collected from decaying mushrooms in Bristol, although the systematic decision to sequence the entire genome was taken only in the eighties. Since then, Sanger scientists helped map the chromosomes of yeast; they are also working on fruit flies and pufferfish, chickens, tuberculosis, malaria and the little bacterium that delivers bubonic plague. This morning, in the American Journal of Science, the Sanger Centre's chief John Sulston and his colleagues announce the completion of the worm project. As they see it, it's both an end and a beginning.

"We have in coded form essentially all the information needed to make an animal," Dr Sulston says. "In a chicken-and-egg kind of way everything that is needed is written

in the genome of *C. elegans*, which is the first animal to get sequenced. So there we have it. We can't understand it all. But if you want to understand how an animal works what better basis can you imagine than actually having in your hand all the information, even if it is written in a code we cannot fully understand?"

**H**ERE SEES the 97 million-letter alphabet as a magnificent look for understanding a starting point for identifying all the genes in the little worm. Genes make proteins. Proteins make tissue, and tissues make systems, and systems make behaviour. With the genetic blueprint, it is possible to see a little worm as a kind of complex, subtle, orchestra of parts

which play together in almost magical harmony. But mice, chickens and humans march to the same harmonies: research into the genomes of yeasts, bacteria, worms and humans tells the same over and over again: all life on Earth is intimately related. If you can discover what makes a yeast or a worm tick, you have at least part of the answer to a human mystery. So each gene identified and catalogued is a prize for science.

The yeast scientists — a European consortium — have had a couple of years start. They already have a measure of the massive task ahead. "In all of these organisms we find we do not know on any level what between 40 and 60 per cent of the genes do. Sometimes we recognise them sometimes we don't. Even if you recognise them

because they are similar to genes in other organisms, it doesn't necessarily tell you what their role in the organism is," says Professor Stephen Oliver, of the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology. But once you can use sophisticated algorithms to "spot" meaning the string of gobbledygook. Other genes have been spotted swiftly by comparison with sequences from other animals. The next trick is to see what they do, how they work, and the instructions that set the genetic machinery in operation will also be coded in the DNA sequence. The worm will be a kind of data resource for biologists for decades to come. It is beginning to answer questions about the machinery of programmed cell death, and therefore about cancer. It is beginning to answer questions about why cells grow old and die.

"The picture one has to have is that all sorts of things drop out immediately," says Dr Sulston. "Most of the sequence has been out for years now and has provided lots of starting points for researchers. There are lots of new research projects starting up: it has stimulated a whole field of biology. There will be far more value yet to be extracted from it than we can see at this point."

### What is the Human Genome Project?

It's a multi-country 15-year effort begun in 1990 to discover the 60,000-80,000 human genes, to make them accessible for further biological study. Non-human organisms are being studied along the way to improve the technology and help interpret human gene function. Roughly 4 per cent of the human genome has been sequenced so far.

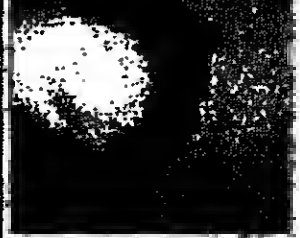


**What will it achieve?** Genome research is revolutionising biology and has given birth to a burgeoning biotechnology industry. Genes involved in various diseases will be found. Animal husbandry will be affected as knowledge of human genetics is fed back into animal production.

What are the potential benefits for people?

- Increased understanding of human biology and disease.
- Identification of genes associated with various diseases, such as cystic fibrosis, sickle cell anaemia, Huntington's disease, and Alzheimer's disease.
- Identification of genes that control the production of drugs, immunotherapy techniques, and other environmental conditions that may trigger diseases, and possible application of gene replacement of defective genes through gene therapy.
- Genomes of six microbes that live under extreme conditions of temperature and pressure have been sequenced. Learning what is unique about their proteins may lead to microbes and their enzymes being used for waste control and cleaning up of spills.
- Biotechnology: Sales of biotechnology products are projected to exceed \$20 billion by the year 2000. Genome

research will provide clues to the development of new medicines and the production of new materials.



• Energy: Biotechnology will provide clean energy for the production of new materials to refined products. Having the genomic sequence of the methane-producing microorganism *Methanobacterium* could lead to a cheaper production of methane.

Source: (1) Science, December 11; information about the Human Genome Project: <http://www.ornl.gov/techResource/turner/Genome/turner.html>



The next enticement is gene therapy: treatment, based on precise knowledge, to repair the faults provided by heredity. The human genome project actually began with the search for individual genes that have blighted certain families for generations: muscular dystrophy, Huntington's chorea, and so on. The genes have been found. Treatment based on knowledge of the genes so far, has proved tantalising. Biologists can see what goes wrong in cases of say cystic fibrosis. But help for the sufferers is still a long way away. "There will be lots of little individual breakthroughs which will benefit individual patients. There is going to be an ongoing series of advances which will depend, in part, on the genome. But they will also depend of course on experimental ingenuity."

That's the toolkit bit: the genome helps, but it does not provide instant solutions. But the knowledge is expected to

pay off, handsomely in terms of public health. The betting is that people who die relatively early in life of heart failure, or stroke, or cancer, die because of their own peculiar mix of genes: evolution has a way of keeping people alive until they are ready to procreate and rear their young. Then, so to speak, it loses interest. But genes are only half the story: the environment in which the genes survive or fail is the other half. The knowledge of the human blueprint is already beginning to provide useful information about the lifestyles and diets that tend to healthy maturity. It is also beginning to present insurance companies and health authorities with some ethical headaches: if someone has "bad" genes, why would you want to accept them as a risk? If they have terrific genes, why should they pay your premiums?

Right now, it is the worm's turn in the limelight. It was small, bred fast and it was transparent: researchers could actually see what was going on in the worm. "It's simpler than a human, in terms of the range of organ structures, but it has a gut, it has a muscle, it has a skin and it has a got a nervous system," Dr Sulston says. "It's a wonderful test tube for biology: you can move things in there, and have them work, and look at them more closely. We haven't come to the end of something. We have come to the beginning of something."

Source: (1) Science, December 11; information about the Human Genome Project: <http://www.ornl.gov/techResource/turner/Genome/turner.html>

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Friday December 11 1998

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Tomorrow: Vorsprung durch Grand Prix

Plus: Crossing the Atlantic

# FinanceGuardian

Decline and deflation

## Home-loan rates tumble

Lee Stuart

**H**OMEBOWNERS have been given an early Christmas present with yesterday's 0.5 percentage point cut in the base rate, but the move will be seen as less festive by savers.

Halifax, Nationwide, Northern Rock and Abbey National were the first lenders to react to the news by reducing mortgage rates.

But the monetary policy committee's decision is bad news for savers, who outnumber borrowers by seven to one. Although the banks and building societies were coy about what effect yesterday's move will have on their savings rates, the average net rate is likely to fall to just over 3 per

cent, equal to the current inflation rate. In the face of such paltry returns and with the likelihood that the base rate will continue to drop as the UK mimics EMU convergence rates, consumers may be tempted to dump deposit accounts and move into equities, particularly tracker funds, in spite of the FTSE's recent volatility.

This would be exceptionally bad timing for the Government, trying to give an upbeat message about saving in the run up to introducing the Individual Savings Account and the stakeholder pension.

Halifax spokesman Mark Hemmingsway said: "ISAs are designed to persuade people who may never have saved be-

What the rate changes mean to you

Amount of loan	Halifax mortgage payment after 2.5% cut	Nationwide mortgage payment after 2.5% cut	Abbey National mortgage payment after 2.5% cut	Northern Rock mortgage payment after 2.5% cut
£20,000	£272.00	£274.00	£276.00	£278.00
£30,000	£408.00	£411.00	£414.00	£417.00
£40,000	£544.00	£548.00	£552.00	£556.00
£50,000	£680.00	£686.00	£690.00	£694.00

Based on interest only mortgage, assuming 20-year term, 10% variable available up to £20,000.



He says the Halifax will make an announcement at the end of December about its savings rate, with the cuts coming into force in early January. As expected, the bank

reduces its headline rate net of basic rate tax by half a percentage point, the new rate will be 3.1 per cent. The Halifax yesterday announced that its standard variable mortgage rate would fall in line with the base rate change, down to 7.7 per cent.

The mutual Nationwide is cutting its mortgage rate to 7.2 per cent, and Abbey National is cutting rates across its three lending tiers, taking its highest rate to 7.65 per cent on loans of less than £50,000.

In the case of the Halifax, the biggest lender in the UK, and Northern Rock, buyers or remortgagors borrowing £50,000 will pay around £24 a month less in interest with immediate effect, although established borrowers will have to

wait until the start of 1999 for relief. Nationwide moves on January 1 for all borrowers.

Alliance & Leicester, Bradford & Bingley and Cheltenham & Gloucester all said they expected to make an announcement within a week.

Prudential's new direct operation Egg, whose launch rate of 8 per cent gross is the market leader for savings, will drop its rate to 6.75 per cent gross after January 1.

Nick Deutsch, chief executive of broker First Mortgage, warned last night that mortgage rates might soon bottom out. "Even if base rates continue to decline, it will be difficult for mortgage rates to follow suit. We may be moving to a scenario where it is not viable to lower mortgages further."

Notebook

## Bumpy ride ahead before soft landing



Alex Brummer

**N**OW we should be really worried. For the third month in a row the Bank of England's monetary policy committee has looked at the outlook for the UK economy and found it wanting.

As a result, the UK has now had the largest sequence of interest rate cuts in five years — a cautious quarter-point in October, followed by a half-point in November and December to bring market rates down to 6.25 per cent. It is now a short canter to 5 per cent by the Budget.

As the Bank spells out in its statement, the global and the UK outlooks are deteriorating sharply. The after-shocks of East Asia, Japan, Russia and the global market problems are no longer a distant thunder but have moved directly overhead. The idea that somehow the service sector of the economy could be sheltered from the recession in manufacturing has gone up in a puff of smoke.

The downward revision in third quarter growth in UK gross domestic product was already under the monetary policy committee's spotlight at its last meeting. But matters have moved on since then, with business surveys, closely followed by the Bank's economists, registering a likely drop in output in the fourth quarter and the first quarter of next year.

In other words a recession projection, despite the pre-Budget report's forecast of 1 to 1.5 per cent growth next year. In particular, the Bank is certain to have been influenced by the negative CBI and Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply service sector surveys. There also have been steady profit warnings from the high street.

What began at Marks and Spencer has rippled through the sector, with Kingfisher (at the lower end of the market) the notable exception. But even it is predicting a "competitive" low margin and difficult holiday period.

Then there is inflation. The East-Asia problem was always going to bring down the price of imports from electronic goods to cars, speeded in the UK case by the strong pound. But most importantly the problems emerging in emerging markets and Japan have exerted a strong downward pressure on commodity prices. The collapse of the oil price through \$10-a-barrel this week is emblematic of the deflation spreading through the global economy. There are few goods which are insensitive to energy prices.

The retreat of inflation makes one glad that the Government and the Bank have a central inflation

target, rather than the upper and lower limit which is part of the European Central Bank mandate.

The symmetry of the Bank's 2.5 per cent inflation target, means that it has the flexibility to loosen the monetary strings when the economy weakens, as at present, and with deliberate speed.

The Europeans, whose recovery could yet be aborted by events in emerging markets, would appear to have no such luxury. Although the recent showing of rates to 3 per cent throughout the euro-11 (with the exception of Italy) does suggest a system that is not entirely insensitive to slower growth and deflationary tendencies.

Back to the UK. Britain has now had a cut of 1.25 points in market rates to 6.25 per cent — the lowest level since the election of Tony Blair. But is this going to be enough to kick-start the economy? In much the same way as there were advocates of the shock increase last May, of a full point, to undo the fallings of Tory policy in late 1995 and early 1997, there are advocates (like the FT's Lex column) of stock treatment now.

Certainly, quarter and half-point cuts are barely perceptible to the consumer, although they may be more helpful to the industrial and retail companies financing investment and stocks.

As far as the person on the street is concerned the arrival of the fixed-rate mortgage, a glory when rates are rising, means that the system is much less sensitive when falling. A half-point cut in mortgage rates for the average mortgage of £80,000 a year means a £24 saving per month that is new disposable income. But only for those with flexible rates.

Moreover, in much the same way as British consumers pay more for their motor vehicles than on the Continent as well as their food and liquor, so they do for their credit. In fact the charges made by UK credit card companies to consumers, are totally out of line with the market.

**A**T the leading provider Barclaycard the present charge is 21.9 per cent when borrowers are in that territory an interest rate cut hardly is likely to make much difference in terms of people's willingness to take on credit.

NatWest has responded to the Bank of England's latest move by trimming its credit card rates by 1.5 per cent to 21.4 per cent, basically matching the three reductions by the MPC in one shot, useful but ungenerous. Only the Co-op Bank, God bless them, has a credit card interest rate which is tied to base rates and quickly kicks in as an economic stabiliser.

As a tool to provide people with a brighter holiday season, the half-point cut in interest rates is better than could have been hoped for, but unlikely to stimulate any kind of high-street revival. Only bigger cuts can produce that and even they are ineffectual given the uncompetitive charging patterns of so many high street institutions.

## Royal Doulton to axe 1,200 workers



The Royal Doulton factory in Stoke-on-Trent in its heyday. Now the firm is struggling with falling sales

Firm takes long Christmas break in attempt to cut £20m costs

Lisa Buckingham

**R**OYAL Doulton, the stricken fine china group, is to axe 1,200 more jobs at least 1,000 of which will be in Britain — with half losing their livelihoods this month.

It is the third swathe of job losses from the group which is struggling to contend with the economic crisis in the Far East, one of its most impor-

tant trading regions, as well as the impact of the strong pound on other export markets. Earlier this year, Royal Doulton said several hundred jobs would disappear with the decision to close two factories. The previous summer another 300 posts had been axed.

To try to cut costs by more than £20 million a year, Royal Doulton is also bringing forward the deadline to close its plant at St Mary's in Stoke-on-

Trent which employs 500 people. Most of its UK ceramics factories will close early for Christmas and not re-open until late after the New Year. Earlier attempts to improve profitability by introducing a four-day week failed.

In a statement the company admitted it makes too many products, holds too much stock, has spent too much on production capacity and too little on selling and marketing.

The gloomy announcement follows a string of large-scale job losses from other major UK corporates, making it one of the worst weeks for em-

ployment and increasing pressure on the MPC, despite yesterday's half per cent cut in base rates. On Wednesday alone, drugs group Zeneca said it would sack 1,000 as a result of its merger with Astra. Smith & Nephew cut 480 while Alstom is to axe 500 jobs.

The pressure on Royal Doulton does not look likely to lift. It admitted yesterday that, in the current climate for retail spending, its sales next year are likely to fall below those of 1997. In the opening 11 months of this year sales were 5 per cent down on 1997 at £205 million and in the cru-

cial month of December they are also expected to lag behind last Christmas. In addition to the job losses, the cost of which will contribute to a one-off charge of £45 million, Royal Doulton is restructuring its remaining businesses as its five product divisions will reduce to two: a collectables division which will include all figure and novelty ranges, Calhoun Glass, Minton and Royal Crown Derby and a tabletop division which will include tableware, crystal stemware as well as hotel and airline products. The group intends to shut

some of its poorer performing retail stores and will consolidate three satellite warehouses into one. In all, about 950 manufacturing and warehouse jobs will be lost and some 250 administrative, support, commercial and retail positions will go. Its shares slumped by more than 12 per cent to their lowest level of 73p and long suffering investors also learned that because of the costs of the reorganisation and the need to cut borrowings from a level where they total 50 per cent of shareholders' funds, Royal Doulton will not pay a final dividend.

## Price of common goods 'falling'

Mark Atkinson

**E**CONOMICS Correspondent. **D**EFLATION has arrived on the high streets, according to a new monthly survey published yesterday by the Bank of England's decision to cut interest rates.

While prices overall are continuing to rise, the most commonly bought goods are getting cheaper, the survey, published by the British Retail Consortium, shows. In the year to November they were down by nearly 1 per cent.

The BRC's survey has a narrower scope than the retail prices index, published by the Office for National Statistics,

which is based on the prices of more than 600 goods and services. Indeed, the BRC monitors the price of 200 goods, divided into five categories: food and drink, household goods, furniture, clothing and personal goods. The BRC claims it is more representative of retailing than the RPI.

"TheONS figure is called the retail prices index, but it includes a lot of things that are not really about retailing such as the price of road tax claims, the 16-month lag between changes in monetary policy and their effect on the real economy mean that the next six to eight months will still be painful. The deflation already being cast by the damaging impact of the pound's strength on industry and the rapid deterioration in global economic prospects.

While a third successive monthly interest rate cut will no doubt give an immediate fillip to flagging consumer and business confidence, the 16-month lag between changes in monetary policy and their effect on the real economy mean that the next six to eight months will still be painful. The deflation already being cast by the damaging impact of the pound's strength on industry and the rapid deterioration in global economic prospects.

The BRC is refusing to disclose the full list of 200 products which make up the index because it says retailers might use it to manipulate prices artificially.

It said, however, that they included Hovis sliced brown bread, an aluminium step ladder, a shower curtain, a man's blazer and cough syrup.

The BRC said the new index "shattered the perception that prices on the high street are too high and rising". But City economists were cautious about accepting its findings. One questioned why goods prices, which are more responsive to the exchange rate than services prices, because many are traded inter-

nationally, were not lower given the sharp appreciation of sterling over the past two years.

Another said the new index would be of limited value to policymakers. It is already possible to construct a shop price index using components of the RPI, though it may be convenient to have the work done by someone else.

The Government's benchmark measure of inflation, the RPI excluding mortgage interest payments, has been in line with the Chancellor's target of 2.5 per cent for three months running. Yesterday's rate cut was prompted by fears that it will fall below that target.

## Knightsbridge Ab Fab store joins the retail chorus of gloom

Julia Finch

**H**ARVEY Nichols has joined the high-street gloom. The London fashion store yesterday unveiled six-month profits static at £2.1 million, he warned that its full year result will be less than last year.

Sales in the last ten weeks are down 2.7 per cent on 1997, although they picked up in December. Chief executive Joseph Wan said: "Christmas is going to be a challenge. The whole nation is talking itself into a recession. Every day there is news of redundancies and consumers are reluctant to spend heavily."

The downturn will be Harvey Nichols' first profits reversal since it came to the stock market in 1991 but has not affected expansion plans for new stores in Edinburgh and Manchester. Mr Wan is also talking with potential partners about licensing new stores abroad in the Middle East.

It is planning two new restaurants, one to cash in on the expensive account lunch-trade in the City and Harvey Nichols also owns the trendy Oxo Tower Thameside restaurant in London, which turned in an operating profit of £424,000 in the last six months, up from £382,000 last year.

## Three factors offer hope of survival as Britain heads towards recession

There is no escaping a period of pain, writes MARK ATKINSON, but there are some reasons to be cheerful

**T**HE newly independent Bank of England has been much quicker on the mark in both raising and cutting interest rates in this cycle than the politicians were in the previous two, which should limit the severity of the slowdown. But there will be no escaping the harmful effects.

Job losses, so far limited to sections of manufacturing exposed to weak export markets, are likely to mount across the economy and feature high on the Government's agenda.

While a third successive monthly interest rate cut will no doubt give an immediate fillip to flagging consumer and business confidence, the 16-month lag between changes in monetary policy and their effect on the real economy mean that the next six to eight months will still be painful. The deflation already being cast by the damaging impact of the pound's strength on industry and the rapid deterioration in global economic prospects.

Some City economists are speculating that the UK economy may already be in recession, although the technical definition of two successive quarters of falling output will not be fulfilled until the spring at the earliest when the GDP figures for both the final three months of this year and the first three of next year will have been published.

Privately, ministers say they will be relieved if they get away with just two quarters of declining output. Their worry is that the downturn could be more prolonged, giving them a political headache to the run-up to the next election. But for now the outlook is reasonably optimistic.

While the momentum behind the slowdown and the big stock overhang in industry is likely to lead to a period of falling output, the economy is blessed with a number of advantages compared with the same point at the last downturn.

First, inflation is low, giving the Bank of England's monetary policy drafters ample scope to continue cutting interest rates aggressively in the months ahead without threatening the Government's inflation target.

David Walton, UK economist at US investment bank Goldman Sachs, expects the cost of borrowing, still twice as high as in the euro-zone, to

come down to around 5.5 per cent. That sounds low when you think that base rates went as high as 15 per cent during the last upswing but with underlying inflation, excluding mortgage interest payments at 2.5 per cent, it still means real, inflation-adjusted interest rates of 3 per cent. In Europe, real rates are already down to around 2 per cent.

Second, fiscal policy will be expansionary from April. After two years of unprecedented restraint over public spending, the brakes finally come off and this should complement the role of monetary policy in stimulating economic activity.

Public spending is set to rise by 2.75 per cent per year in real terms over the next three years, according to Treasury figures. This includes an extra £40 billion for health and education.

Third, the excesses of the recent mini-boom have been nowhere near as bad as they were at the end of the 1980s. Then, consumers and businesses borrowed to the hilt, making the retrenchment that followed much deeper than it would otherwise have been. This time round, consumers and businesses have been much more cautious. It suggests they won't have to rein in their borrowing so far.

If all goes well, the UK economy could well be growing again by the middle of next year, as the Government's latest economic forecasts optimistically envisage.

A word of warning, however. While it must be remembered that the slowdown in growth has been actively engineered by the Government and Bank of England, which both tightened policy in the wake of Labour's election victory, it has been exacerbated by the global economic crisis.

The danger now is that it will go too far, much further than necessary to squeeze incipient inflation out of the system.

Over the international situation, the Government has little if any control.

## How we compare

Current G7 interest rates

Japan	0.50
France	3.00
Germany	3.00
Italy	5.50
USA	5.50
Canada	5.75
UK	6.25





**Naked Portrait With Reflection (right) by Lucian Freud (left) was sold at Sotheby's (bottom right) for £2.8 million, making it the most expensive contemporary art work ever to have been sold in Europe**

## Portrait of the artist as a record earner

## Dan Glaister on how a Lucian Freud painting fetched £2.8m

HE painter Lucian Freud became the most expensive contemporary living artist sold at auction in Europe when his Naked Portrait With Reflection was bought for £2.8 million this week.

The painting, executed in 1986, was expected to sell for between £750,000 and £1.2 million. It was included in a contemporary art sale at Sotheby's in London which realised just over £10 million.

The sale, says a good year for Lucian Freud, was the first portrait of the artist Frank Auerbach sold for \$914,500, the third highest price paid for one of his works. In May, the world record price for one of his paintings was set at Sotheby's in New York, when *Large Interior After Watteau* sold for \$3.5 million. A Sotheby's spokeswoman said of the sale: "It is a very important work and this is a fantastic price. We expected it to sell for between \$750,000 to \$1.2 million, so it has more than doubled our expectations. The work was by a very famous painter. There was an incredible response from collectors around the world."

The previous European record for a contemporary work was \$2.5 million in April 1990 for *La Femme en Blanc* by French artist Jean Dubuffet.

Other highlights of the sale included Domplatz, Gerland, by the German artist Gerhard Richter, which sold for £2.2 million. The painting, which had previously hung in the boardroom of the electronics company Siemens, was

bought by the Frizker family, which owns the Hyatt Regency hotel, will hang in the lobby of the Hyatt Park Hotel in Chicago, now under construction.

The sale of the Freud confirms him, at least in art market terms, as the most important living British artist. This summer he had a show of recent paintings at the Tate, which made headlines because it included a small portrait of Jerry Hall.

Although the 75-year-old painter is renowned for his reclusiveness, he is thought not to be oblivious to the significance of the art market. After the world record sale in May, a close friend said: "He's very pleased. It's the first big picture of his he's had since the 60s. He had one badly it could have had a negative effect on other sales."

The sale undoubtedly had a positive effect, as the recent results from Sotheby's show.



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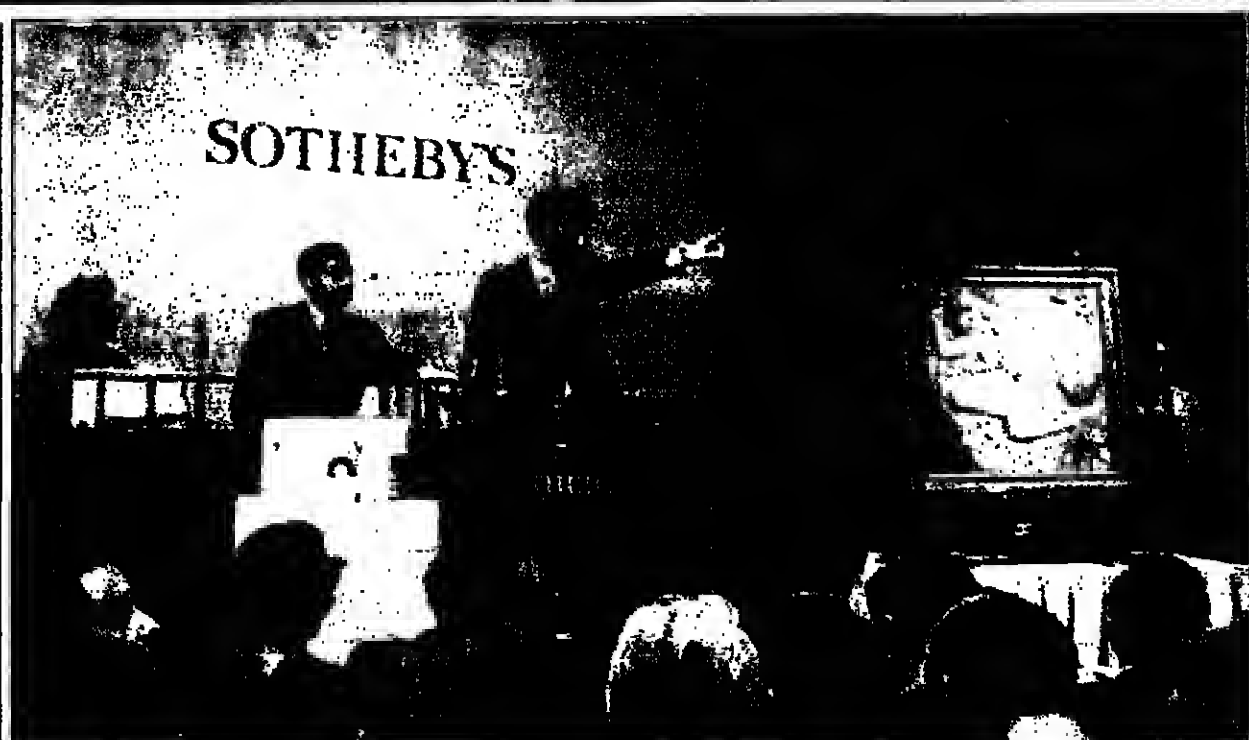
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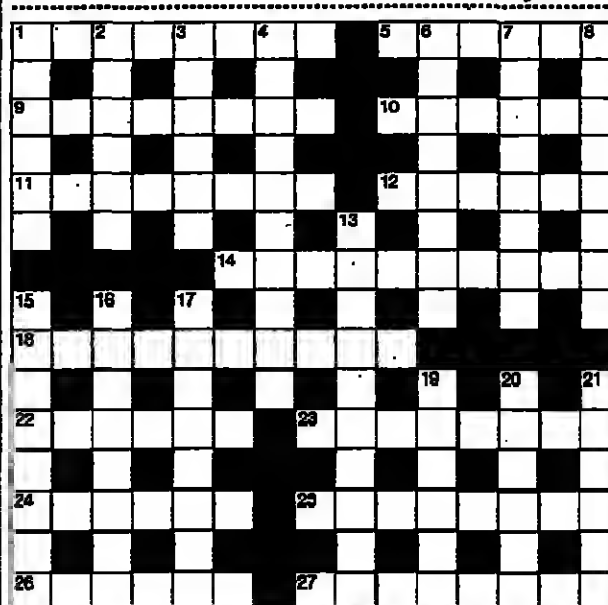
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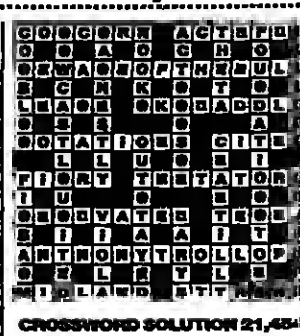


Across	
1	Printer's top money-making equipment (8)
5	Settle on 12 1/2 feet (8)
7	Woman prepares meals with water (5,5)
10	Place to lay one's head at small hours for clergy (8)
11	Pessant gives no offers nothing to (8)
12	This month includes little time you reach the coldest (8)
14	Putting on airs before getting tight... (10)
15	...nearly for one who has no one over the eight? (5,4)
22	Vehicle weight with packaging (8)
23	Furniture that was sat on and broken by a lady? (8)
24	Gold coin initially concealed as a plant (8)
25	It may help to avoid a serious crash (8)

26 important character of  
Midwestern establishment (8)  
27 Allen called, without disturbing  
rest (8)

**Down**

1 Some agreement achieved, but  
containing little substance (8)  
2 Subtle distinction of taste  
made by a state religion (8)  
3 The first of three children needs  
a nose pipe (8)  
4 He wrote settings to be found in  
a poster (10)  
5 Student taking a job to support  
his studies (8)  
7 At the pole and in the Arctic  
Circle might be snow (8)  
8 The Saint could be slow to act (8)  
13 She catches a man by cunning  
will, but there's no warmth in it  
(5,5)  
15 Story of stake-holding; the City  
act (8)  
16 A boy overtaken by his senior in  
the race (8)  
17 Leading man said to upset  
Philo's wife (8)  
20 Worker lumps up to join work  
unit north of the border (8)  
21 Strong line; if you take one for  
donkey (8)  
21 Denial of the Grapes Order (8)



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Glenn McGrath grew up shooting pigs. Now, as one of the world's best fast bowlers, he shoots down Poms. **Greg Baum** profiles Australia's speed de-

[illegible]

with 109 wickets in all and 28 of them at just over 24 the Test. Become a respectable wicket on the green and often bemoaned the absence of the quonilly leg-spin bowling of his era. Fittingly saw the rabbit of his beloved craft through the

Bredman famously shanghaied his way to the back of the lemming home, hitting a golf ball against the brick stand of a water tank with a stump. That quickly evolved into hitting bowlers to all points of the local grounds, then it was Sydney and New

slips and long for six o'clock and the front bar of the local pub. Little changed when he reached the Test arena, where he had to play with the legend having it that Wallers

His father was a bank manager and the Heavys were

overlook Rod Marsh as the most successful blunder of all-time Fama has done little so far — or quietly the Queensland drama Peter Hanton.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100
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thing (6)

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# Project Scheduler

**Reporting to: Development Director**

**Key objectives:** To draw up and manage the Project schedules for the development of the company's two toolball titles.

**Salary: 20-30K**

**Principal duties:**

- To work as part of the development team
- To generate, monitor and update project plans, to include risk assessment and possible contingencies,
- Keep project momentum moving by reviewing and updating schedules on a weekly basis.
- Regular visits to external developer and liaison with the technical director and Producers on project progress.
- Reduce scheduling slippage by concentrating on risk analysis and recovery plans and resource effectively.
- Provide input to the PSM on project dates
- To help manage the project team through the attending of meetings, assigning actions and monitoring these actions.
- To maintain all project documentation accurately throughout a project.

**Experiences:**


- Real world experience of complex projects, preferably in a computing environment
- Experience of Microsoft Project.
- Good spreadsheet and Windows knowledge a necessity.

**Skills:**

- Good team player.
- Strong self-motivation with the ability to meet objectives.
- Excellent interpersonal skills
- Ability to work in a traditional environment.
- Good verbal and written communication are essential as is the ability to produce work to tight deadlines with little supervision.
- Able to cope in a hectic environment with little supervision.

**Contract:**

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email:llw@ea.com

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## Quick Crossword No. 8923

### Across

1 Short and fat (6)  
 4 Pasty underground stem (6)  
 7 Amble (6)  
 8 Remember (6)  
 9 Aquiline (4)  
 10 Lurch (6)  
 12 Gadabout (7)  
 17 One pulling forward a molen (6)  
 19 Medical work (4)  
 20 Ol' horse (6)  
 21 Barring — set down (6)  
 22 World — city in Kansas (6)  
 23 Unyielding (6)

### Down

1 Devilish (7)  
 2 Of a perfect but impracticable ideal (7)  
 3 Game played on a table (6)  
 4 Lascivious (6)  
 5 Stowey display of bobooses (7)  
 6 Long sea voyage — feticious (6)

11 Significant (6)  
 13 Full, clear and musical (7)  
 14 Worship (7)  
 15 Boldly behaved (7)  
 16 Scatter (6)  
 18 Snow leopards (6)

1 Down

1 Devilish (7)  
 2 Of a perfect but impracticable ideal (7)  
 3 Game played on a table (6)  
 4 Lascivious (6)  
 5 Stowey display of bobooses (7)  
 6 Long sea voyage — feticious (6)

## Steve Bell

MUMMITY? MUMMITY? THEY'RE ALL SAYING I'VE GOT A BIG HEAD!

OF COURSE, YOUNG MAN! THEY'RE ALL SAYING YOU'VE GOT A BIG HEAD! I'VE GOT A BIG HEAD!

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OF COURSE, YOUNG MAN! THEY'RE ALL SAYING YOU'VE GOT A BIG HEAD! I'VE GOT A BIG HEAD!

## IT

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**Martin Thorpe**

**H**UGE changes to next season's European competitions were announced yesterday by UEFA in Brussels stamped by paving the way for a third Champions League.

The competition featuring the top clubs throughout Europe was forced on Uefa after Europe's top clubs threatened to join a substantially more lucrative breakaway Super League. Exactly how much money clubs

have a chance to win a league trophy in the Champions League group stage via a qualifying round. If they lose they join the Uefa Cup.

Although the fourth-placed sides in the Italian, German and Spanish leagues must have a licence of qualification for the knockout competition, it is the second of English clubs in Europe means that the fourth-placed team in the Premier League will qualify for the Uefa Cup, as will the FA Cup winners.

In order to increase the financial part of it, and ensure that the company is not in a negative financial position, we have decided to expand from 25 clubs to 32 and played on Wednesday and Thursday evenings.

Though it was still to be too early to tell, the fact that the final U.S. Cup game was played on Wednesday night, rather than Saturday, was certainly a promising sign.

U.S. has not ever backed away to please the top clubs by also representing that franchise from their home country. The Champions League will not be in Europe by transferring it to the U.S. Cup.

[illegible]

**Non Cox**

[illegible]

**WOLFF**

[illegible]

FLA00POT, 210.051.30 (part wo

[illegible]

## Boxing

Carl Thompson, the Memphis-based author of the best-selling book *Black Codes*, has his contest this year. His ruminations, his World Book Organization title in a row over the years he has authored to defend the book against Shakespeare's *Joigny*, Nelson, *Shirley John Rowling*, Nelson will now take on the British and Commonwealth.

Tony Drago beat Stephen Hendry 5-2 in their quarter-final of the German Masters in Birmen year, his first win in 18 attempts against the

Norfolk Game was yesterday cleared of snoring under a banner of the game's economic art. Games officials checked their passports.

## In North of States

**Ice Hockey**  
 Geoff Dwyer, Niall Chinn has been suspended for 10 games and fined £250, writes *Yu Buchtelov*. It follows an incident at the December 1 game at London Knights when the Great British forward received a million-pound fine for refusing an opponent. After reviewing the match, the referee said:

**Sports Sponsorship**  
 Seven sports are seeking Government help to end their dependency on tobacco sponsorship. Rugby league, tennis, snooker, ice hockey, curling and clay pigeon shooting officials have agreed to meet with the Government in the New Year in an effort

## Football

**FOURTH** Second-round replay  
PA THOMPSON  
Prescribed: Rothwell Tn v Hendon

**GOLF**

**NEW ZEALAND** (Australia, Leek-  
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**NHL Florida & Ontario**

## Alpine Skiing

WOLFGANG VOITL, a 40-year-old Viennese skier, won the men's giant slalom at the 1988 Winter Olympics in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. He was born in 1948 in Vienna, Austria. He is 1.78 m (5 ft 10 in) tall and weighs 75 kg (165 lb). He has been a professional skier since 1968. He has won a total of 10 World Cup titles, including four in giant slalom. He has also won a total of 10 World Championships, including four in giant slalom. He has been a member of the Austrian national team since 1968. He has been married twice and has two children. He is currently a coach and a commentator for the Austrian Ski Federation.

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# Taxing time for The Winning Line

**First In Line . . . Norman Williamson powers home on Fourth In Line at Taunton**



**PHOTOGRAPH: FRANK BARON**



Lingfield all-weather meeting

Table with 2 columns: Race, Horses. Includes races 1.40, 1.50, 2.00, 2.10, 2.20, 2.30, 2.40, 2.50, 3.00.

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Cheltenham Jackpot card

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United must watch their speed and space behind

David Lacey warns of rival quality and the dangers within as Alex Ferguson's team await their fate in the last-eight draw

Manchester United cannot be drawn against each other at this stage, neither can they be drawn against Real Madrid, who also qualified as runners-up. Under the regulations, United must play their quarter-final first leg on Wednesday night at Old Trafford.

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Conquering Europe

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Curcio in Palace doghouse

Curcio, who has started only four matches under Neil Warnock, is being considered for a loan move.

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Cheltenham all-weather meeting

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Doncaster runners and riders

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## Rugby Union

# British League hangs in a Celtic balance

Paul Rees and Robert Armstrong look at the proposed make-up of the divisions and the stance of the four home unions

THE prospect of a British League starting next season hinges on a meeting next week at which representatives of the four home unions — England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland — will try to hammer out a formula which settles the long-running dispute over the proposed Celtic League. The chances are that the league will go ahead but it is not likely to amount to much more than a general committee meeting. The Welsh Rugby Union has already indicated that it will not support the Celtic League but it is not clear whether it will support the proposed Celtic League.

## The proposed groupings

Two meetings have been held this year to discuss the proposed Celtic League. The first meeting was held in London in June and the second in Dublin in October. The Welsh Rugby Union has already indicated that it will not support the Celtic League but it is not clear whether it will support the proposed Celtic League.

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whether there will be access for clubs outside it. It will accept the composition of the two divisions for the sake of expediency, recognising the weakness of its own bargaining position, but it wants them to become based on merit in time.

A concession granted to the Welsh Rugby Union was that it would be able to play in the Celtic League. The Welsh Rugby Union has already indicated that it will not support the Celtic League but it is not clear whether it will support the proposed Celtic League.

Strong European tournaments would probably be enough for the Irish, who are concerned that entering their own premier cup, the All-Ireland, would mean a loss of focus on the Celtic League. The Irish Rugby Football Union remains undecided.

### Vickers suffers new injury blow as comeback misfires

PHIL VICKERY, the Gloucester and England batsman, has suffered a new setback in his attempt to regain fitness after a neck injury. The 25-year-old left-handed batsman is still recovering from a serious injury sustained after he was hit in the neck by a fast bowler during a match for Gloucestershire.



Vickery... distraught



Cool outdauer... Australia's Alexander Melchor takes to victory in the World Cup Super-C in Valdivia yesterday

### Sailing

Calinour meets his match in Spitfall as teenager takes early group lead

Bob Fisher in St Thomas

THE eight skippers taking part in the America's Cup Challenge, whose ultimate aim is to win the Cup, were in action yesterday for the start of the Virgin Islands Match Race Grand Prix. The match race was held in St Thomas, Virgin Islands.

### Rugby League

Wakefield strengthen squad despite financial uncertainty

Andy Wilson

WAKEFIELD TRINITY yesterday made their first signings since their promotion to the Super League. The signings include a number of players who have been in the club's youth system.

### Weissnitzer extends Cup lead with win in Super-G

Andy Wilson

AUSTRIA'S Alexander Weissnitzer has extended his lead in the women's Alpine World Cup yesterday with her third win of the season. In a Super-G in Val d'Isère, Weissnitzer defeated her nearest rivals.

### Cricket

Second Test South Africa v West Indies

# Donald's defiance frustrates Lara

Andy Ganevane in Port Elizabeth

A N unbroken innings by South African batsman Jacques Kallis frustrated West Indies captain Brian Lara. Kallis scored a century in the first innings, helping South Africa to a commanding lead.

### Scoreboard

Team	Wicket	Runs	Wicket	Runs
South Africa	1st Innings	285	2nd Innings	100
West Indies	1st Innings	100	2nd Innings	100

### Second Test Pakistan v Zimbabwe

Saqlain and Waqar do the job after Sohail reports in sick

David Peel

THE 11th hour withdrawal of Pakistan captain Inzamam-ul-Haq, who pulled out with the flu, did not prevent the team from securing a convincing victory over Zimbabwe. Saqlain and Waqar were the stars of the match.

### Marks to initiate planned revival at Somerset

David Peel

V/C MARKS, the cricket correspondent of the Observer, has been named as the new chairman of Somerset. Marks is a former Somerset player and has extensive knowledge of the county.

The 11th hour withdrawal of Pakistan captain Inzamam-ul-Haq, who pulled out with the flu, did not prevent the team from securing a convincing victory over Zimbabwe. Saqlain and Waqar were the stars of the match.



Bamapour  
a soft touch  
for McCoy

viii | Screen reviews

JUST OUT

The Boys

\*\*\* 1/2  
Dir: Rowan Woods. With David  
Wenham, Toni Collette, Lynette  
Curran. Cert 18, 86 minutes.

\*\*\*\*  
Dir: Tobie Hooper. With Matthew  
Burns, Alan Dargatzis, Paul A. Parnah.  
Cert 18, 83 minutes.

\*\*\*  
Dir: Martin Campbell. With Antonio  
Banderas, Anthony Hopkins,  
Catherine Zeta-Jones.  
Cert PG, 136 minutes.

\*\*\*  
Dir: Andy Wilson. With David  
Duchovny, Timothy Hutton, Angelina  
Jolie. Cert 18, 84 minutes.

CRITIC'S CHOICE

1. **Out Of Sight**  
George Clooney and Jennifer Lopez  
out to the chase in Soderbergh's  
fast, funny, sexy film noir treasure.

2. **It's A Wonderful Life**  
James Stewart plays the job-like  
American everyman in Frank Capra's  
perfectly prepared Yuletide treat.

3. **My Name Is Joe**  
Peter Mullan's performance powers  
Loach's tough drama from Glasgow's  
DGS landscape.

4. **The Boys**  
Rowan Woods' pungent Australian  
murder-story, revolving around the  
oppressive fudge and kitchen land-  
scape of three dimming brothers.

5. **Texas Chain Saw**  
Bones sculptures and psychotic  
human wrecks clutter about Inella  
Tobe Hooper's unearthen horror  
landmark.

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when it's on.

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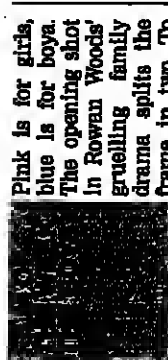
The Guardian Friday December 11, 1998



Split decision... David Wenham as Brett and Toni Collette as Michelle in *The Boys*

# Hate of the moment

Xan Brooks is shaken and disturbed by Rowan Woods' portrait of family life



Pink is for girls, blue is for boys. The opening shot in Rowan Woods' gruelling family drama splits the frame in two. To the left lies the sky-blue hue of the Sprague family living-room and on the right the flushed tiles of the kitchen. Dividing these 'colours' down the middle runs a thick white wooden strip. This rigid dynamic is central to the tone and spirit of *The Boys*. Its tension is the tension between men and woman, between chill stasis and the heat of action, as feasting Brett Sprague (David Wenham) chugs beer from the bottle and ogles daydream telly while his murderous impulses bloom inside him. For most of *The Boys*, anomic has the upper hand. The threat of violence, though, runs through the film like 'fettering' through Brighton Rock.

In its native Australia, *The Boys* has already been isolated up — alongside Ana Kokkinos's yet-to-be-released *Head On* — on evidence of a harsh new social-realist vein within their domestic industry. It opens on the morning of Brett's release from prison, having served 12 months for aggravated bodily harm. There he sits, farrel-faced on the kerb, fishing in the packet for his last tag while he waits to be ferried back to the 'red-brick shelter box' that the family calls home. Once there, the Spragues reorder themselves in what one imagines to be a timeless hierarchy. 'We are all gods in our own world,'

remarks Brett at one point. His particular world is a drab suburban lay-out of lounge, kitchen, toilet and the bedroom where he keeps his self books. Younger siblings Shaun (John Polson) and Sievie (Anthony Hayes) are his principalings, and mum (Lynette Curran) his cooling domestic help. Pink walls, blue walls. A forlorn chandelier and indecipherable crumbs in the rugholes. The kettle is on, and trouble is brewing at the Sprague family pile.

*The Boys* is adapted from Gordon Graham's 1981 stage play which was in turn apparently based on the true-life murder of a local nurse. At its bedrock, it remains a piece of filmed theatre. The action spans a long day's journey into night, the dialogue hats back and forth like a tennis match. You can almost picture the exploded partition-wall stage set that the players would have moved through. Still, Woods brings it to life.

Sometimes his camera is fixed and formal, sometimes plunging head-held into the action. He incurs sleek 35mm with plesiated stretches of processed video, leans heavily on slow-motion and sudden fades to black to convey menace. Shots start out blurry. Then the focus knob is turned and the image turns clean and sharp, like a myopic rhinoceros in on its prey. Most effective is his way that Woods toys with his time-frame, weaves the narrative with a cour-

terpoint rhythm. Instead of flashback, he gives us flash-forwards. *The Boys* editing cuts forward at intervals, reeling into the future in ever-widening arcs ('18 Hours Later', 'Two Days Later', 'Three Weeks Later'). These bitty case-order segments play the role of prophetic nightmares within the piece. In the end we never witness the crime that bones on the horizon; just its pressurised build-up and ruinous aftermath. It is a marvellous technique, a subtle and restrained incision that none the less manages to make *The Boys* genuinely cinematic.

The source material, though, remains a problem. *The Boys* has Woods maps out the interior of the Sprague house with such intensity that you feel you're living in it. By contrast Graham's characters remain flat, flitting through the rooms as though in search of a proper backstory. Something to make them more than

Southman symbols of family dysfunction. Put it down to the pull between director and playwright, a strain released in the film's losided take on its characters and scenery. Woods maps out the interior of the Sprague house with such intensity that you feel you're living in it. By contrast Graham's characters remain flat, flitting through the rooms as though in search of a proper backstory. Something to make them more than

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# Friday Review

Friday December 11 1998



## The teenager who turned politics into art

By Simon Hattenstone

Photograph by Martin Godwin

Donal McCann is staring down death | Are there any real divas left in modern opera? vi | The latest film reviews viii

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See inside for details.

**MegaStores**



Meet Samira. She's a director from Iran, the new world capital of film. She's 18 1/2

VI Music

The Guardian Friday December 11 1998

III

Goodness Gracious me

Virgin Festival

BRIBE SHOCKER!

20 THE SPICE GIRLS  
21 THE NOTORIOUS B.I.G.  
22 THE NOTORIOUS B.I.G.  
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They used to throw tantrums, drink like fish and overeat — oh, and sing like goddesses. But are there any real divas left in modern opera? Michael Quinn investigates

## Divas for pearls

Then, opera's cognoscenti would mourn the great performances they hadn't seen. Now the rank and file mourn the performances they have. And yet some say we are in a golden age of divas and have seldom had it so good. If the names of Bartoli, Georgiuli, Fleming, Graves and Kelessidi don't trip off your tongue, you are not alone. When Helene Metheopoulos wrote her first collection of interviews with divas in 1991 (*Divas: Great Sopranos And Mezzos Discuss Their Art, Gollanz*) she complained in it about the dearth of suitable candidates for the job.

No longer confined to the opera house, they drap themselves over the covers of glossy lifestyle magazines and across the sofas and swivel chairs of television chat shows with numbing regularity. (One securely established American diva is currently suing her record company for failing to get her enough chat-show invites, thereby she claims, damaging her career.) In fact, so numerous and ubiquitous are they that if a diva were to turn up on your doorstep tonight as a cut-above-the-average single-groom, you'd hardly bother to answer the doorbell.

It wasn't always thus. There was a time when the diva was an aloof creature of Olympian stature with a rarity altogether in keeping with the dedication that the name — Latin for "goddess" — implies.

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### 'Companies talk up their singers, but half a diva ain't no diva at all'

Andrew Bennett

The Guardian Friday December 11 1998



Capturing real life... Masoumeh and Zahra Naderi, the wild girls of *The Apple*

Does the translator know how her mother died? He says she turned to death in the house, and though it was probably an accident there was inevitably much conjecture in Iran.

Samira returns and stares hard at her mother. I ask her whether she is making another film? She says she's thinking about it, but she's not telling me what it's about, nebnab-nab-nab-na, and she giggles.

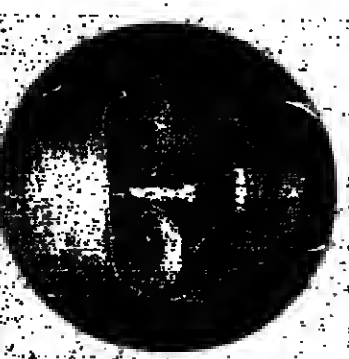
Would she ever live outside Iran? "No, never." Would she make a film outside Iran? "I don't think so because I know my culture." But then again, she says, when she went to the US she was amazed by the similarity in the details of their lives.

I tell her how surprised I am that Iranian films are so secular. She asks what secular means before laying into it. What's the point of more buildings when we should be encouraging young writers? In an ideal world I would like to see more radio. I'm a great fan of Radio 4. The standard is very high, with excellent news in the morning. The comedy is particularly good but I am torn when there's a good match on. One thing I make time for on tour is reading. I have very Catholic tastes but right now I'm re-reading a brilliant, timeless piece, *Cider With Rosie*, by Siegfried Fry's Liar was an enjoyable read and I like Ben Elton's work.

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Interview by Caroline Eggleston  
The Apple is released on December 26

My cultural life



**Nicholas Parsons**

Find it such a challenge to find everything in, especially now while I'm on tour. I tend to opt for the theatre and cinema instead of watching TV, which is becoming very predictable going for quantity rather than quality. When I'm travelling I don't get the chance to see theatre but I always check out the cinema. I read all the reviews and make a little note to myself to try and watch up. I love to see a film for what it's worth, for what it's set out to do.

I have to see film on the big screen; video is not the same thing at all. Seeing *Private Ryan* is one to watch again. As it gets, it has the style and sophisticated performances like Casablanca and all those great films of the past which is now very up to the minute. Elizabeth took great license with history — I know that this way well — but you can allow it to be good films. I'm longing to see *Amis*.

There was a period when the film industry was churning out the same stuff, then along came the brilliant *LA Confidential*. I enjoy *Travis*, so seven years in that was a very exciting story and very interesting taking you into an area that was forbidden for so long.

As for theatre, I go for anything that sounds different and interesting, and not always for academic pleasure. I'm a great admirer of *Phantom*, who's very off the wall, and *Peter Shaffer*. I'll go to see anything by David Hare, especially with *John Durr*.

Dutch, Yvanou Rosa's *Art* was a superb piece of writing and great theatre. Musicals go on forever so you can always catch them, but plays tend to come off early.

Theatre is wonderful in this country but the political parties are not putting enough funding into it. What's the point of more buildings when we should be encouraging young writers? In an ideal world I would like to see more radio. I'm a great fan of Radio 4. The standard is very high, with excellent news in the morning. The comedy is particularly good but I am torn when there's a good match on. One thing I make time for on tour is reading. I have very Catholic tastes but right now I'm re-reading a brilliant, timeless piece, *Cider With Rosie*, by Siegfried Fry's Liar was an enjoyable read and I like Ben Elton's work.

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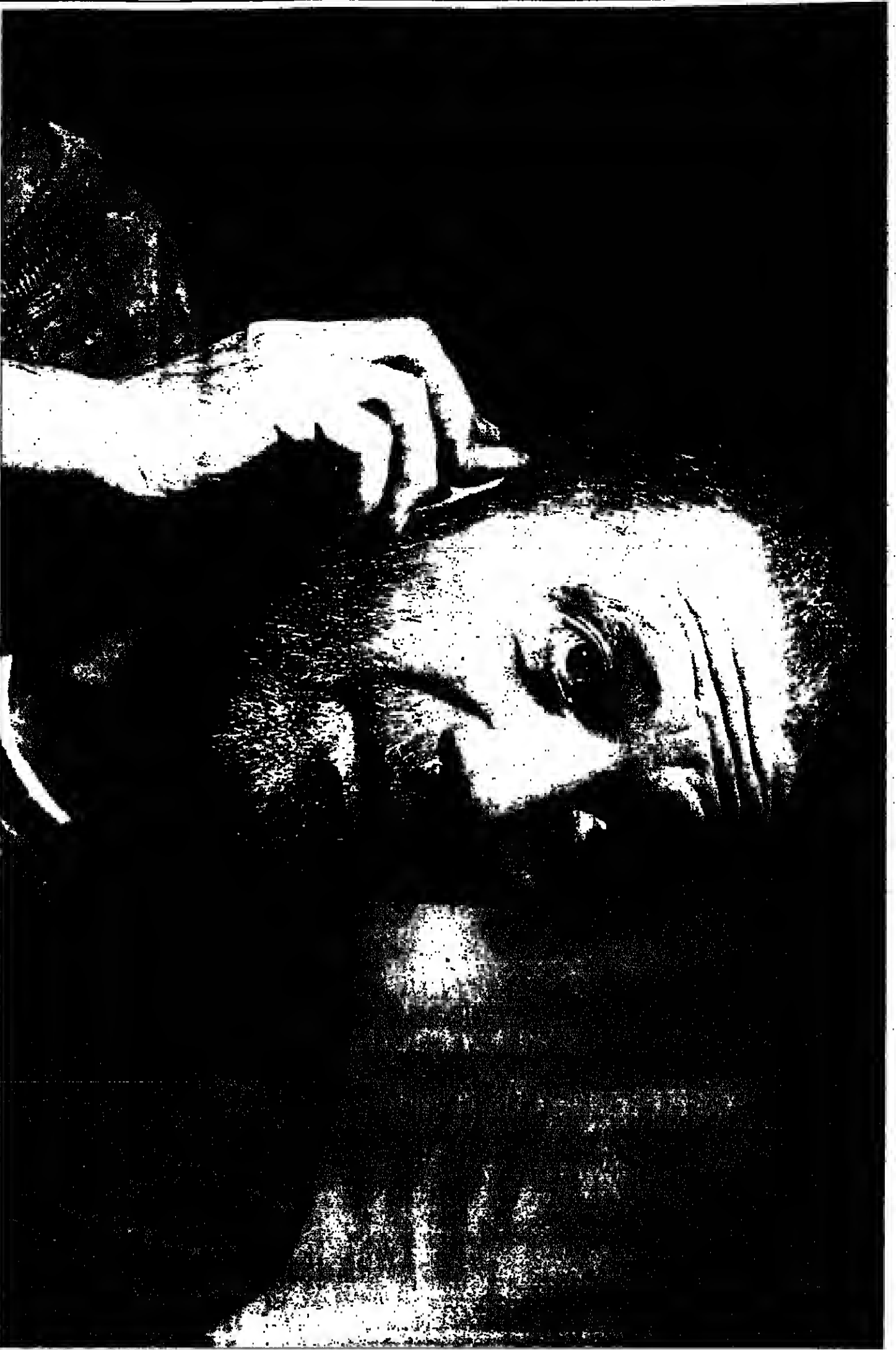
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## Staring down death

Donal McCann, widely regarded as the greatest Irish actor of our age, has put a lifetime's tumult into his work. In a rare interview, he tells **Fiachra Gibbons** why the cancer that might have killed him has given him a new take on life

**Fiachra Gibbons** I would never have recognised you! It was out before I'd realised what I'd said. Donal McCann looked pained. I felt a total twist. The man shaking my hand was so much thinner than the one I had watched on film the night before.

I had been scanning the lobby of a Dublin hotel for that man when he grabbed my arm. I knew he hadn't been well — the big G, they said, the pancreas. It wasn't quite like seeing a ghost, but it was a shock. And now I was babbling like a fool.

There are stories about McCann. Stories that would make your hair stand on end and I had been warned. Everything I'd been told — the drinking, the depression, the sharpness of tongue — went spinning through my mind. All seemed to click into place. There was a lightness about him, too, as if some great weight had been lifted from his shoulders.

Sit down. Sit down, son," he said, tossing his rolled-up copy of the *Irish Times* on to the sofa. He has a place of advice for me. Oh dear. If you're ever in a tight spot, he says, you can always rely on Jesus or Danny Pinnau.

So why did you do that? I would never have recognised you! It was out before I'd realised what I'd said. Donal McCann looked pained. I felt a total twist. The man shaking my hand was so much thinner than the one I had watched on film the night before.

"You feel his characters have been stretched beyond the endurance of the horses. Like a lot of actors, he goes to great pains to prove how ordinary he is. What followed wasn't quite an interview, more a conversation. The sort you have when you're stuck with someone in a railway station waiting for a train you secretly hope won't come. Complex isn't the half of it. Luckily McCann doesn't wear a watch. He sits and talks like he has all the time in the world.

"I wish you luck," a friend of his told me. "Getting a handle on Donal is like moving embers with a pitchfork. McCann has spent his life in an unequal struggle with his talent. You've probably caught him playing one of a long line of tortured souls on screen. You might even have seen John Huston's last film, *The Dead*, and been like many, haunted by him. But this is only a small part of the story. On stage he bears into the memory of Frank Healy in *Peter's Faith*. Healer, Captain Boyle in *June and The Paycock* and most recently as a dying police chief locked in a nightmare of regret in *Sebastian Barry's The Stewart of Chisholm*.

"Donal's magic is like music — impossible to explain, he just gets inside you," one director told me. "There's something deeply spiritual about him. He is a kind of saint in some ways and an unrepentant bomb in others." Another said, "You feel his characters have been stretched beyond the endurance of the horses. Like a lot of actors, he goes to great pains to prove how ordinary he is. What followed wasn't quite an interview, more a conversation. The sort you have when you're stuck with someone in a railway station waiting for a train you secretly hope won't come. Complex isn't the half of it. Luckily McCann doesn't wear a watch. He sits and talks like he has all the time in the world.

"How did you learn to do that?" she asked. "By watching you," he replied. "Who is this guy?" asked Newsweek when he took *The Shawshank Redemption* to New York two years ago. "He's got to be the world's best actor," "Simply the greatest artist of our time," crowned two heavy-weight critics on either side of the Atlantic. I read these off from his file and he wriggles in agony on his seat. "Artist? Jesus! That is a big word to be so close with." I can see he'll have headaches for a week.

know, you pick a fight with the director." Why? He hops about on the couch and hums and haws, and lights another cigarette. There is a tug of war between the two of them. He is a fully formed man, that doing well-paid rubbish is what we all aspire to. It's ludicrous. I'm not going to hire a soap box to denigrate the whole thing, but this desire to be known, I just don't understand it. I couldn't take it seriously.

Film, he maintains with typical Irish intelligence, is a director's medium. "The stage is the only place really where it comes down to it for actors and writers." Look back over his career — "I have no career," he insists. "I have a life" — and a pattern emerges. Great highs followed by some horrific personal disaster or another, then silence. Then another triumph. It's not hard to see why they call him *Lazarus*. McCann has often compromised himself — but never his work. So why did you do it Donal? Why didn't you take the money and run instead of putting yourself through the writer's? Was it your politics or something deeper? "Neither," he said, suddenly looking 100 years old. "It's like this. You have a gift and you have to stand by it. It is sacred. The granite integrity that McCann, and everyone who has worked with him, has been ground. He walked out of *Arms and The Man* at the Abbey in the early eighties and didn't do a play again for four years. "Once I was having a bad time, the drink and what have you," he tells me, "and during that time I could not pass a theatre without retching." For a time during June, one of his finest hours, he had to be checked out of a mental hospital for each performance after getting himself into a terrible scrape trying to save a girl who had threatened suicide.

Despite his success, McCann has led a hard-to-mouth existence. He is an ascetic who lives alone and he doesn't own a car or house. Are you as hard on others as you are on yourself, I ask. "I am not a bully. If that is what you are saying. Writers and actors don't get many chances. I was thinking," he said slowly, "just before you came, about all the great writers that were missed in this town. How many got poor productions way back. I often think, what if we missed someone terrific?"

"Peter's Faith" (which he brilliantly reinterpreted) is the exception. It was a second chance for the work and for me and we proved it was a great play. I am proud of that. It doesn't happen often." He picks back on the couch and takes another long puff of his Silk Cut. McCann smokes like an old dog and sometimes his life seemed like a sentence to his younger brother was killed by a bus in front of him when he was a child. His stage was also transmuted by anger and guilt, even though he could have done nothing to save him.

Conscience is big in the McCann clan. His father, a schoolmaster in all but name, and a writer of Dublin kitchen comedies, was also twice mayor of the city and was responsible for clearing many of the city's slums, then the worst in Europe. From him he inherited the principles and the dry wit. I mention *The Dead*, which Huston made when he was dying. "The called king of Greece came for his tea. The script was great but I don't

as the song says — thinking what they will be. We talk about Peter's Faith. Before he turns the conversation to cancer. There's that high-sounding sincerity again. "My dear son, God is good. I'm still here talking to you. It's been a year and sometimes I don't know whether it is a gift or an affliction. There have been a few times, of course, when you think it's a curse. I never thought being an alcoholic, you know, with the cold, buttery and that, would stand me in such good stead."

The next day he was going back into hospital for another "procedure". He is worried, but doesn't stop at all. He is going to New York to see "my friend", who he met on the set of *The Nephew*, his new film, a real little whimsical crowd-pleaser to which he gives a comical twist. "She is a very special lady indeed," he says, and the boy in him, the one so many women have wanted to mother breathe into a big smile. I'm afraid to ask any more and for a while he drinks his coffee and I drink my tea, and we sit there —

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